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DECEMBER 2015

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On the cover:

Sedgwick Park, Sussex (*page 36*).
Photograph: Clive Nichols

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Matt Biggs
A regular panellist on BBC Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time, Matt picks his favourite plants for winter scent on *page 81*



Nicola Stocken
Photographer and writer Nicola visits trug maker Charlie Groves in his Sussex workshop on *page 97*



Andy McIndoe
A multiple RHS Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medal-winner, Andy selects the best evergreens for the season on *page 89*

Despite shorter days and colder temperatures gardens can look absolutely splendid as bark shines and frost defines edges



December is an exciting month, with Christmas on the horizon and shrubs and trees full of colourful berries ripe for the picking for wreaths and decorations. Whether the birds will leave us any holly berries is another question. It's also a month when gardens can look quite dramatic as the elegant outlines of bare shrubs and trees emerge.

We've packed this issue with gardens that sparkle in winter rather than shut down. In anticipation of colder weather, the wonderfully named garden DIP ON THE HILL in Suffolk (*page 20*) shows how architectural plants come into their own when dusted with a gentle powder of snow. Meanwhile, at SEDGWICK PARK in Sussex (*page 36*), the grandeur of the topiary structures lights up a frosty winter's morning as the sun peeps over the horizon. There can be more to a garden than plants and at PALLINGTON HEATH in Dorset (*page 28*), ponds and lakes create a glorious setting for sculptural art of many kinds, with some pieces so cunning that you'll think you are looking at real wildlife.

There's also no shortage of plants to dazzle in December as we feast on PLANTS FOR WINTER SCENT (*page 81*). And for the gardener who has everything, delve into our special CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE (*page 59*) so you can truly treat your loved ones this festive season.

It is the start of a new era for *The English Garden* and I am delighted to be part of it as the new editor. Rest assured that we shall continue to celebrate the best in English garden style in the coming months. Look out for more beautiful gardens, choice plants, inspiring ideas and helpful advice, designed especially for you.

Happy gardening!



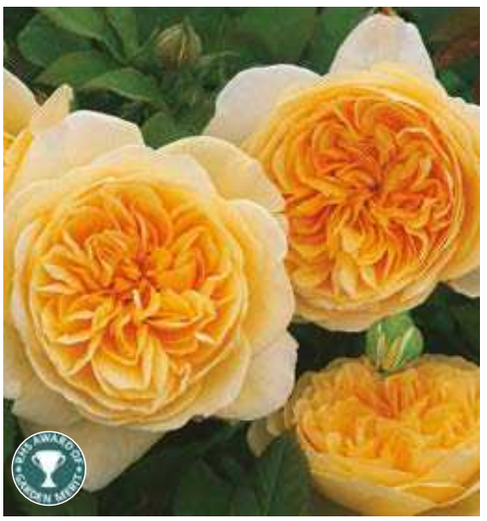
Clare Foggett, Editor

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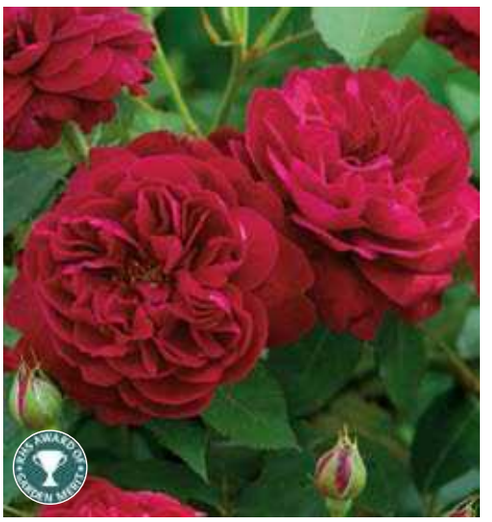
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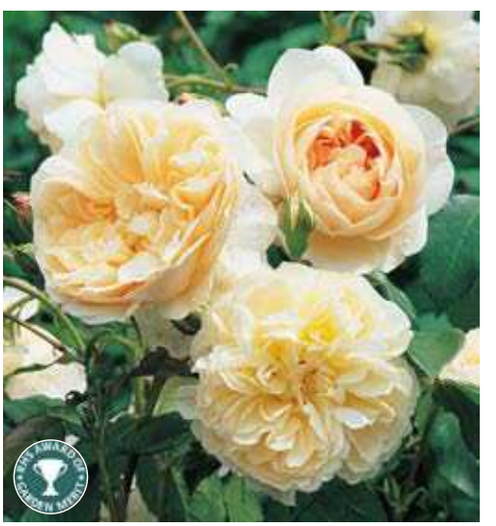
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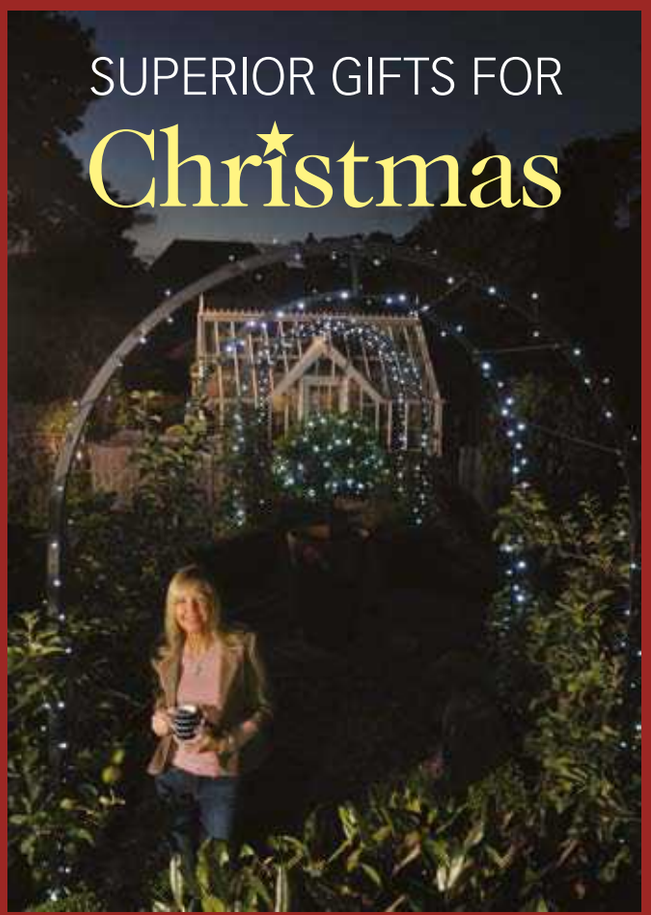
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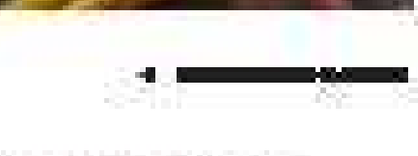
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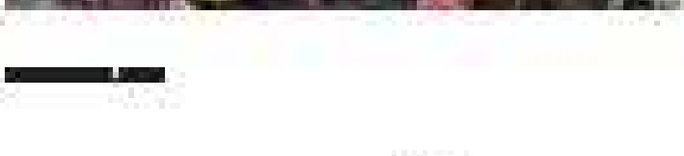
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NEWS & EVENTS

Our round-up of the latest events, including Christmas lights switch-on, photography exhibitions and gift ideas for real ale enthusiasts this month

Garden in style



Add a sprinkling of elegance sparkle to a gardener's Christmas stocking with a trowel or fork from Orlan Kirby, whose retro prints have many loyal fans. The set, £17.95 each, are sold separately and are available through mail order



Five gardens for good festive walks

[redacted]

New royal president

The Duchess of Cornwall is the new president of the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, thanking patrons Lord Selborne of Wanton Courtown (93) and Roy Lancaster VMH (84). In supporting the important work of the world famous garden in Romsey Hampshire, The site is home to 44 National Plant Collections and [redacted] over 400 Champion trees as well as over 42,000 plant species and cultivars. The garden and its collection were began by Sir Harold Hillier and the owner of the [redacted] Hillier Nurseries and Garden Centres and receives more than [redacted] visitors a year. →


Arley Hall: Cheshire tour


Trewithen: Cornwall tour


Cogshall Grange: Cheshire tour


Trebah: Cornwall tour

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TWO EXCLUSIVE GARDEN HOLIDAYS

DISCOVER GARDENS OF CHESHIRE & CORNWALL

The English Garden is delighted to offer readers two new exclusive garden tours – one in Cheshire and the other in Cornwall. Some of these gardens are rarely open to the public, so book now to avoid disappointment.

GREAT CORNISH GARDEN LEGACY TOUR

8 May-12 May 2016 (4 nights at the Greenbank Hotel, Falmouth with harbour views)

Garden visits will include:

- **Bonython** Tropical and traditional horticulture. A tour of **The Lost Gardens of Heligan**
- **St Michael's Mount with lunch at The Godolphin Arms** A jewel in Cornwall's crown, enjoy both the castle and gardens or visit **Trengwainton** with its breathtaking displays of magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons
- **Lamorran** Wonderful views and exotic plants
- **Poppy Cottage** Year-round plant interest
- **Trelissick** Superb views and an inspirational garden. The house is also open to view
- **Trebah** Sub-tropical paradise with a stunning coastal backdrop
- **Trewithen** A rare and unique Cornish gem

Price per person £720, National Trust member £705. Single supplement £40 per night (£160). Includes four nights' accommodation, dinner and breakfast, lunch at The Godolphin Arms, all garden entries and tours, executive coaching and professional tour manager.

PRIVATE GARDENS OF CHESHIRE TOUR

20 June-23 June 2016 (3 nights staying at the Rookery Hall Hotel, near Nantwich, Crewe)

Garden visits will include:

- **Bluebell Cottage** Created by former winner of the BBC TV show *Gardener Of The Year*
- **Arley Hall** Long history and traditional design with inspired modern ideas and additions
- **Cogshall Grange** A new garden created with the magic touch of Tom Stuart-Smith
- **Hatton House** Beautifully landscaped with extensive herbaceous borders and rose garden
- **Sandymere** Superb planted formal terraces that flow down to the lakes and countryside
- **Dorfold Hall** Historic estate with a seductive quality and recently redesigned borders
- **Wollerton Old Hall** An Arts and Crafts-style garden with a series of 'rooms'

Price per person £595. Single supplement £40 per night (£120). Includes three nights' accommodation, dinner and breakfast, one lunch and refreshments where stated. All garden entries and tours, executive coaching and professional tour manager.

BOOKING DETAILS

Tours include all garden entries, guided tours, executive coach and tour representative. Both hotels are four-star. For full itineraries, visit: www.heritagetouring.co.uk
A non-refundable deposit of £125 is required to confirm your reservation.

The tours are administered and managed by Heritage Touring and all reservations should be made directly with them on behalf of *The English Garden* magazine. Heritage Touring has been offering quality garden tours for 25 years.

To book your place on one or both of these tours, and for more information contact Heritage Touring, Flaxmans, West Tytherley, near Salisbury SP5 1NR.
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Email: tours@heritagetouring.co.uk
Visit: www.heritagetouring.co.uk

IMAGES/HERITAGE TOURING



FESTIVE FOLLIES

In Gloucestershire, take a trip to the 18th century landscape garden at Painshill on 2 and 3 December and follow a festive route past follies and trees lit with colourful lights to arrive at a sparkling crystal grotto. Timed tickets are available from 5-8pm. Adults only, booking required, tickets £8. For more details, visit www.painshill.co.uk



Wonderful Wreaths

Make your own festive wreath at one of several sessions being held this month. Powderham Castle & Gardens in Exeter, will be holding workshops in the Servants' Hall on 8 December. The cost is £35. To book, tel: +44 (0)1626 890243 or visit www.powderham.co.uk

Winterbourne House & Garden in Birmingham, will be offering wreath-making as part of its pre-Christmas event on 5 December, for which the entry cost is £6 plus a small additional amount to cover materials. For more information, tel: +44 (0)1214 143003 or visit www.winterbourne.org.uk

Meanwhile, the Cotswold Gardening School in Gossington will be holding several festive workshops throughout December, the cost for which is £40. To check dates, visit www.cotswoldgardeningschool.co.uk

Further wreath making ideas on pg 75

IMAGES/PAINSHILL - MIKE LAMBERT WREATH - POWDERHAM CASTLE
BIRD - MIKE LANE/RSPB

New winter friends

Nordic invaders, such as fieldfares (*below*) and redwings, could join robins, chaffinches and more common birds in our gardens this winter if the weather becomes particularly harsh. These migratory members of the thrush family tend to gravitate towards more built up areas when food becomes scarce. Gardeners can help them by putting fruit, such as apples, on the ground. At the same time, make the toughest time of the year easier for all birds by keeping feeders topped up. 'People report seeing more unusual birds in their gardens from December,' said Grahame Madge from the RSPB. →





Christmas trend

Over eight million potted poinsettias will grace British homes this month. This Mexican native gets its common name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, who introduced them to the US in 1828. Its Latin name is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*. For care tips and design ideas, visit www.christmas-star.info



A very Berry Christmas

The Great British Bake Off star and Royal Horticultural Society ambassador Mary Berry will be switching on the Christmas lights at RHS garden Wisley at 5pm on 2 December. Afterwards, there will be opportunity to enjoy a spot of late-night shopping at The Wisley Christmas Shop.

The garden at Wisley will also be aglow with winter colour throughout December. Visitors can explore the new Winter Walk, with architectural outlines softened by modern mass plantings and fresh views to enjoy, and follow the Bark Trail for a different perspective on trees. Light installations in the shape of giant flowers will be dotted around from 3 December. For more details, visit www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley

WHAT'S ON: DECEMBER

HOLLY TRAIL AT RHS GARDEN ROSEMOOR

Tuesday 1 December, Devon

A talk on Rosemoor's holly collection by former curator Christopher Bailes, followed by a chance to explore the gardens. See over 150 varieties of holly in the collection (*below*). Tel: 0845 2658072. www.rhs.org.uk



NATURAL CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS AT RYTON ORGANIC GARDENS

Friday 4 December, Warwickshire

Spend an afternoon using willow and other materials to make beautiful wreaths, garlands, wall hangings, stars and tree decorations to take home. 1-4pm. To book, tel +44 (0)2476 303517 or visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk

CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND AT THE PAVILION GARDENS

Saturday 5-Sunday 6 December, Derbyshire

Enjoy festive activities for all of the family (*right*), including Santa's Grotto, face-painting, rides, animals and over 60 stalls selling Christmas items. 10am-5pm. For details, tel: +44 (0)1298 23114 or visit www.paviliongardens.co.uk



WINTER PUBLIC OPENING AT HIGHCLERE CASTLE

Saturday 5-Sunday 6 December, Newbury

The Earl and Countess of Carnarvon welcome visitors to share their wonderful home during the festive season. Highclere Castle's prized antiques, beautiful furniture and paintings will be on display, while fans of the hit TV series *Downton Abbey* will instantly recognise the magnificent State Rooms. 9.30am-4.30pm (last admission at 2.30pm). The gardens, tearoom and gift shop will also be open. Tickets must be pre-booked. Adult: £20. Child (four-16): £10. Children under four: free. For more details, tel: +44 (0)1635 253210 or visit www.highclerecastle.co.uk

CAROLS IN THE COURTYARD AT PENTILLIE CASTLE

Wednesday 16 December, Cornwall

Wrap up warm and join the carol singers at 6pm. Refreshments available. No booking required. For more details, tel: +44 (0)1579 350044 or visit www.pentillie.co.uk

IMAGES/MARY BERRY - LUKE MACGREGOR/RHS HOLLY COLLECTION - JIM WILEMAN/RHS

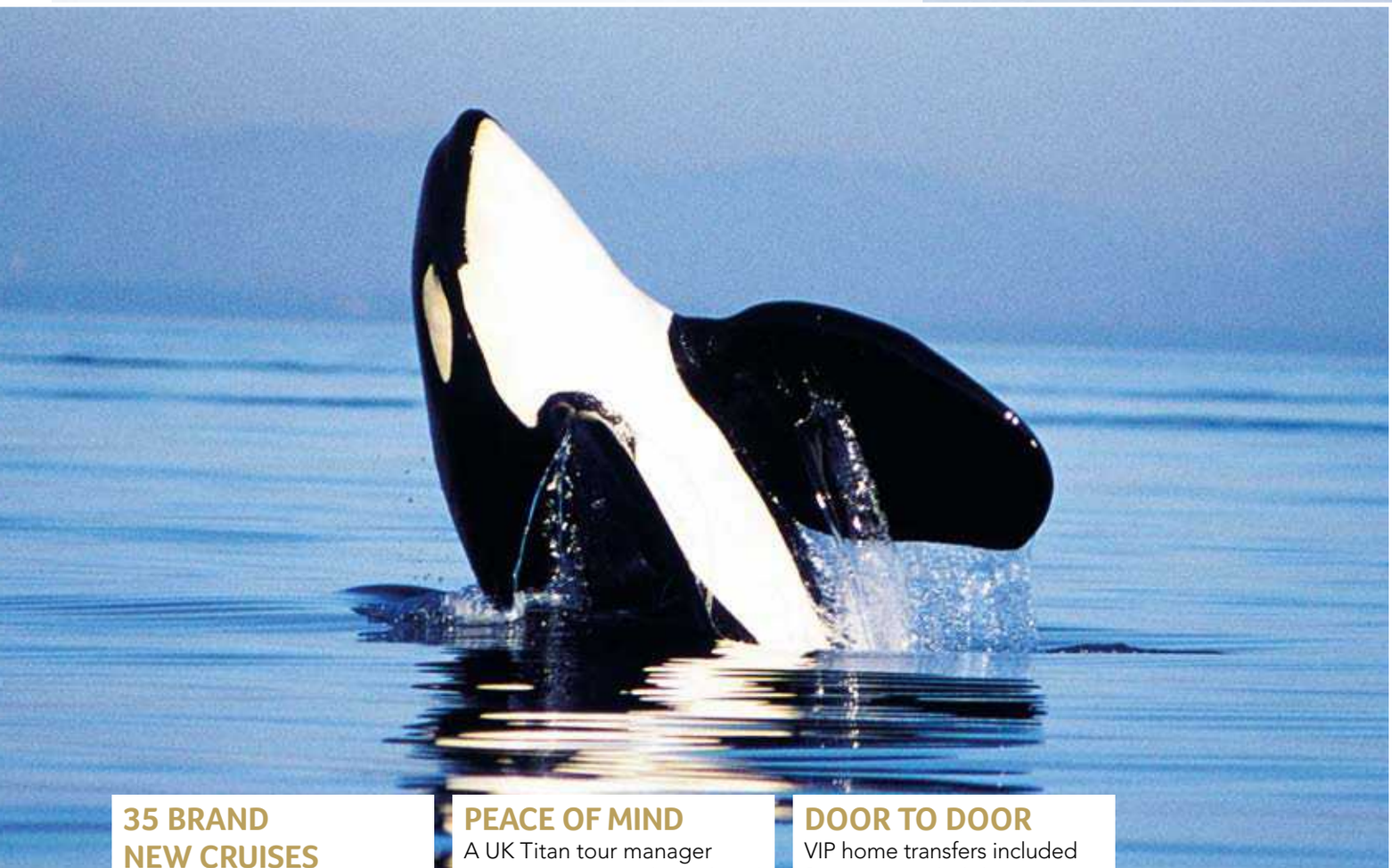
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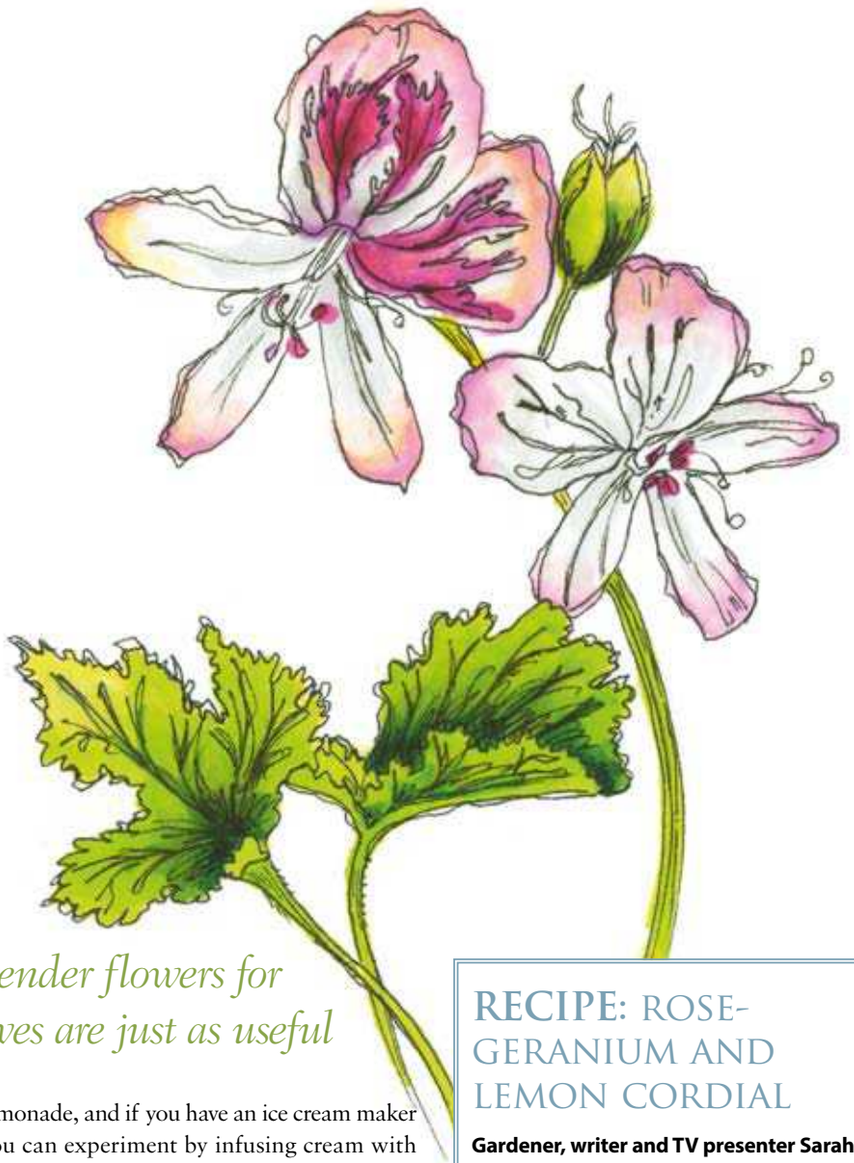
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ASCENT OF AROMA



'Perfumed leaves smell so good that we forget how easy it is to harness their aromas in the kitchen'

PELARGONIUM GROWING TIPS



→ I'm a sucker for an unusual plant, and as soon as I read a description of the cola plant (*Artemisia abrotanum* var. *maritima*) from the Manor Farm Herb nursery in Oxfordshire, I knew I'd be planting one before long. The silvery, feathery foliage grew so well in my quick-draining raised herb bed, and the aroma from the leaves as I brushed past while weeding was so delicious – it *does* smell like cola! – that for a while I forgot to pick some to take to the kitchen. I eventually added some to a pot-roasted pork shoulder, which gave a nice kick, and a few sprigs muddled into a glass of fizzy water taste good too.

If you don't want to go to the bother of getting hold of this rather obscure member of the artemisia family, what about the lavender that inhabits almost every garden? You may pick and dry the flowers for scented cushions, but the leaves are just as useful. Some cooks add the dried leaves to their *herbes de Provence* mix, and it's a feature of the *ras el hanout* spice mix of North Africa. The chopped leaves can be added to home-made lemonade, and if you have an ice cream maker you can experiment by infusing cream with lavender leaves for a subtly perfumed dessert.

You may pick and dry lavender flowers for scented cushions, but the leaves are just as useful



The granddaddy of this group, though, must be scented leaf pelargoniums. The flowers, though generally pretty enough, play second fiddle to the softly furry leaves. There's an array of scents to choose from, including the citrus of 'Cy's Sunburst', the cedar-scented 'Clorinda' and the piney 'Variegated Fragrans'. Perhaps the best known and loved are the rose petal scented types, such as 'Attar of Roses'.

Scented leaf pelargoniums arrived in the US only a few years after the Boston Tea Party, and soon became established as a useful plant for the house and garden. The Victorians fell for scented leaf pelargoniums in a big way, breeding ever more unusual varieties, but by the early 20th century they began to lose ground to the brasher charms of the zonal pelargonium in our gardens. Their fortunes revived as gardeners rediscovered their charms.

Layer a few leaves in a jar packed with sugar for up to a month, then remove before using the sugar in baking. You can also use them to flavour jams and jellies, and even make a liqueur with vodka and sugar. ◆

RECIPE: ROSE-GERANIUM AND LEMON CORDIAL

Gardener, writer and TV presenter Sarah Raven grows *Pelargonium* 'Attar of Roses' and 'Sweet Mimosa' especially for this recipe, and for adding to blackberry and apple pies and crumble. Add citric acid if you want to store this for more than three or four days in the fridge. This recipe comes from www.sarahraven.com – a supplier of plants, bulbs and seeds for flowers, fruit and veg.

Makes 2 litres

Ingredients

- 2kg caster sugar
- 1 litre water
- Handful rose-scented pelargonium leaves
- The juice of 6-8 lemons (depending on whether tartaric acid is used)
- Finely grated zest of 2 lemons
- 30g citric (or tartaric) acid (optional)

Method

- Heat the sugar, water and pelargonium leaves until the sugar is dissolved. Cool.
- Remove the geranium leaves and add the citric acid (if using), juice and zest.
- Dilute to taste with sparkling water.

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Kiss and Tell

Jonathan Briggs runs a consultancy and online seasonal business selling mistletoe and grow-kits, based in Gloucestershire

I have always been fascinated by plants, especially unusual ones. I studied botany at university, and worked on several parasitic species, including tropical mistletoes growing on mangrove swamp trees in Kenya.

Afterwards, I worked in nature conservation in the UK and studied the ecology and conservation of our own European mistletoe *Viscum album*. I initiated and ran the UK National Mistletoe Survey with Plantlife and the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) in the 1990s. Since then, I have become much more involved with mistletoe issues – its history and folklore, conservation and management, Christmas trading, marketing and helping people grow their own.

My role varies considerably, and is strongly biased to the winter season, with mistletoe harvesting mostly in November and December. I climb ladders in apple orchards (where mistletoe is harvested), while using long-handled extending pruners. We hand-pick the best sprigs with the greenest leaves and the brightest berries, before they are dispatched and delivered to clients.

The season lasts for several months after Christmas. February and March become particularly busy, as this is the time for mistletoe planting. I run planting workshops for conservation groups, and give talks on every aspect of mistletoe to gardening, wildlife and history groups.

Mistletoe just seems to make people happy. At my talks, the interest can be overwhelming. There are challenges to my job, though, particularly if the harvest means climbing halfway up a tree in freezing rain or snow.

It is not easy to research mistletoe but I learn more each year. I am currently working on a definitive book covering mistletoe history, biology, conservation and cultivation, and am planning more work researching mistletoe management – past and present.

Working with mistletoe is a huge pleasure. It has gradually become – much to my surprise – a proper (though seasonal) job, and is very rewarding.

Find John's online business at www.mistletoe.org.uk ◆

IMAGE/ANNE-MARIE RANDALL **WORDS**/VICTORIA MASON

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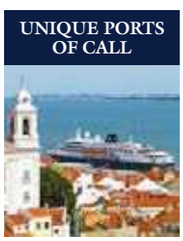
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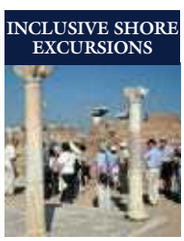
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Tales of the UNEXPECTED

In a small Suffolk village lies a 15th century thatched cottage where the garden is anything but traditional

PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM | **WORDS** STEPHANIE DONALDSON





ABOVE The fan-shaped leaves of *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* stand silhouetted against the house. **RIGHT** The path curves sinuously up the hill, passing the summerhouse which is discreetly tucked away amongst the shrubs and trees. **BOTTOM RIGHT** Green comes in many shades, making this evergreen garden far from monochrome.

There is something gloriously unexpected about the garden at Dip on the Hill. Hidden down a narrow side lane in the Suffolk village of Ousden, the 15th century thatched and limewashed cottage gives no hint that its garden – extending up the hill from the back of the house – is about as far from traditional as it gets. While the surrounding village plots wax and wane with the seasons, at Dip on the Hill there are 365 days of evergreen interest – and never more so than when textures and outlines are highlighted by a dusting of snow. Spiky leaves appear spikier, individual topiary shapes gain definition and the distinct layers of planting stand out in sharp relief.

Yet despite its exotic appearance, this is not a garden that has been planted with questionably hardy specimens in the hope that they will withstand the rigours of an East Anglian winter. 'All the buying was based on choosing plants that would survive,' explains garden owner Geoffrey Ingham. 'Actually, I thought it was going to be colder than it is, so I haven't really planted anything that is at risk. Although we did have a tree fern for a while because Christine (Geoffrey's wife and co-gardener) wanted one – I wrapped it every winter but it didn't survive. Our neighbours have one and it has withstood -10°C, but they make a really good job of protecting theirs. I think there's enough to do without having to wrap things up.'

Geoffrey had already developed an interest in evergreen planting when the couple moved to Ousden from their previous garden in Cambridge in 2005. It was his friend (and owner of Architectural Plants) Angus White's description of the average British garden as being 'about as fascinating to look at in winter as a wet breeze block with a couple of twigs' that got him going. Angus was also the man who guided Geoffrey in his selection of tough, easy-to-grow evergreen plants that include photinias, phormiums, viburnums and escallonias. 'I'm not a plantsman – far from

At Dip on the Hill, there are 365 days of evergreen interest – and never more so than when textures and outlines are highlighted by a dusting of snow

it', says Geoffrey. 'It doesn't worry me that you can see many of the things I use growing in supermarket car parks – when they are mature, some of those plantings are superb. I see the plants as the material to make the designs, but they do have to be well-grown, and anything that doesn't flourish is removed. The limited plant selection is absolutely deliberate, and is more limited than it was 10 years ago. I've spent the past five years simplifying things.'

Looking up the hill, it's the palms with their fan-shaped leaves held stiffly above hairy brown trunks that draw the eye – they are a startling presence in a winter garden. In summer, they help to give the garden the appearance of a lush and rather tidy sub-tropical valley but laden with snow, the first instinct is to fear (quite unnecessarily) for their survival. '*Trachycarpus wagnerianus* is completely windproof,' says Geoffrey. 'Gales →











CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Performing best in full sun, *Phillyrea latifolia* is a hardy, drought-resistant tree; protect *Fargesia robusta* from an east wind and this frost-tolerant bamboo will reward with green foliage year round; *Elaeagnus* x *ebbingei* is an evergreen shrub suitable for exposed sites; *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* offers striking form; several species of *Buxus* are grown in the UK, with *B. sempervirens* being the most common; *Phyllostachys bissettii* is fully frost hardy and drought tolerant – it is inclined to spread once settled and is best contained; the sharp, strap-like leaves of *Phormium cookianum; Prunus lusitanica,* Portuguese laurel*,* is an evergreen, and may be grown as a shrub or small tree.













LEFT A meandering path is lined with various hardy species including *Trachycarpus wagnerianus, Phormium cookianum, Viburnum tinus* and *V. davidii*.
ABOVE Rounded forms appear in various guises: here, as cloud-pruned *Osmanthus burkwoodii* and squat domes of *Prunus lusitanica*. *Pinus sylvestris* is a stately complement in the background.

→ can whip round it and it shrugs them off. It doesn't hold the snow as much as *Trachycarpus fortunei*. Unfortunately, it is also much more expensive.' The palms emerge from among rounded hummocks of *Viburnum tinus* and *V. davidii*, with the strap-like leaves of *Phormium cookianum* (the hardiest of all New Zealand flax, according to Geoffrey) punctuating the undulations.

Further up the slope, several *Pinus sylvestris* and *P. pinea* provide shelter for a group of multi-stemmed *Phillyrea latifolia* and an airy *Maytenus boaria*, a South American tree. Geoffrey has ambitions for the pines to eventually grow very, very tall. 'When the golf is on television from Augusta in Georgia, it's the pine trees I'm looking at,' he says. 'They are straight, vertical, pruned and manicured – those trees really are something.'

He systematically prunes away the lower branches of his own pines as they grow – and awaits the day when he can admire his own lofty specimens. This area of the garden is underplanted with ascending billows of topiary, this time primarily of box and *Lonicera nitida*. The variations of leaf shapes and sizes gives the topiary a subtle textural quality that would be lacking if only one variety of plant was used.

Off to one side is a magnificent stand of golden bamboo *Phyllostachys vivax* f. *aureocaulis* that Geoffrey has thinned and trimmed so that every cane stands in relief against the darker background of the boundary planting. When snow falls, it weighs down the stems as it clings to the leaves, causing them to bend low to the ground, but they quickly return to their allotted positions as soon as there is a thaw. Like everything else, they are very well trained.

Dip on the Hill, Ousden, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8TW. Open by appt to adult visitors from July to September, admission £3.50 in aid of the National Gardens Scheme. Tel: +44 (0)1638 500329. Email gki1000@cam.ac.uk

Geoffrey's top tips →

The variation of leaf shape and size gives the topiary a subtle textural quality that would be lacking if only one variety of plant was used

Dip on the Hill garden notebook

WINTER PROTECTION

Although most of the plants in the garden are left to their own devices, Geoffrey does provide added winter protection for juvenile palms of under a metre. This is because it's much colder near the ground and frost can damage the new growth while the trunk is still forming.





SUITS HUE

The cottage, which is the oldest in the village, is attractively framed by ascending levels of greenery of contrasting shapes and sizes. The soft straw hue of the painted walls adds warmth to the wintery scene and invites you in.



BRUSH OFF

A light covering of snow or a heavy frost will disappear without assistance, but heavy snowfalls should be gently brushed off using a broom. If possible, leave a thin protective layer of snow to prevent possible frost damage.

Garden challenges

WIND Although sheltered from the biting easterly winds, the garden was initially exposed to westerly gales, so one of the first things Geoffrey did was erect and plant windbreaks. He believes it is the combination of cold and wind that is most harmful – in still air, plants are much less vulnerable to damage.

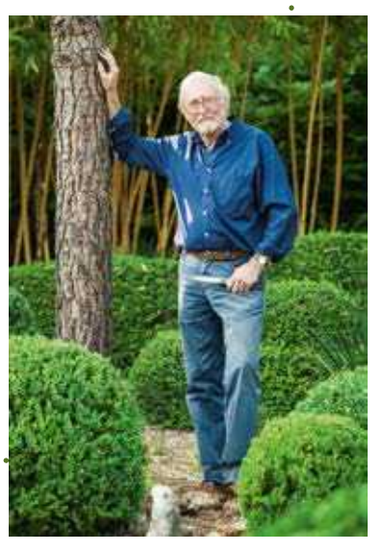
ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are in Suffolk, Geoffrey also recommends:

- **GARDEN Ickworth House** where the Italianate garden and arboretum are of interest. The Rotunda, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 5QE. Tel: +44 (0)1284 735270. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ickworth
- **GARDEN Cambridge University Botanic Garden** Winter Trail, and nearby glasshouses where you can defrost. 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel: +44 (0)1223 336265. www.botanic.cam.ac.uk
- **VILLAGE PUB The Fox Inn** Front Street, Ousden, Suffolk CB8 8TR. Tel: +44 (0)1638 500740 www.theousdenfox.co.uk

Geoffrey's top gardening tips

- **Decide whether your garden** is a collection of plants or a composition. Dip on the Hill has lots of common or garden plants and they do a good job. Be bold, ruthless even – if it doesn't look good, remove it and give it to a friend.
- **Don't buy one of anything** unless it's a large tree, and even then, think hard about it. Geoffrey thinks plants tend to look better in their own company.
- **Even Geoffrey finds certain plants irresistible** from time to time – he warns that January is a danger time when nothing is happening in the garden. He is currently trying to find a spot for three *Mahonia eurybracteata* 'Soft Caress', and has repotted them while he finds the right place to plant them.
- **Don't forget to feed your trees** and shrubs – Geoffrey uses blood, fish and bone. If foxes or badgers regularly visit the garden, use a plant-based fertiliser instead such as powdered seaweed to avoid them digging up your plants.

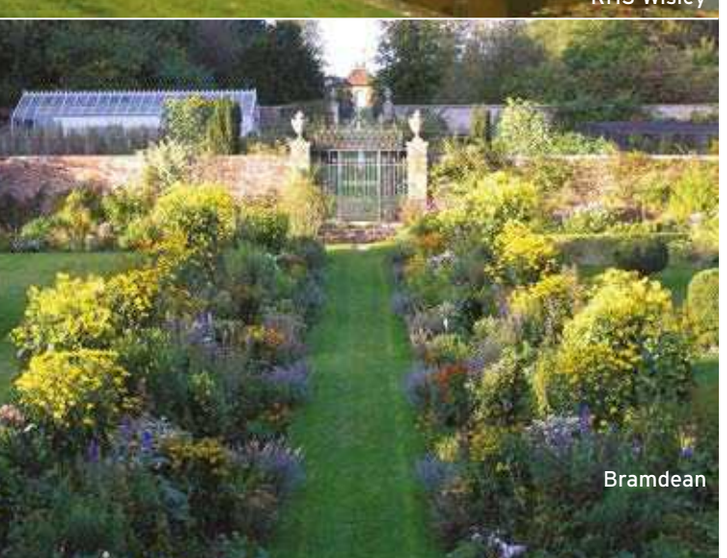



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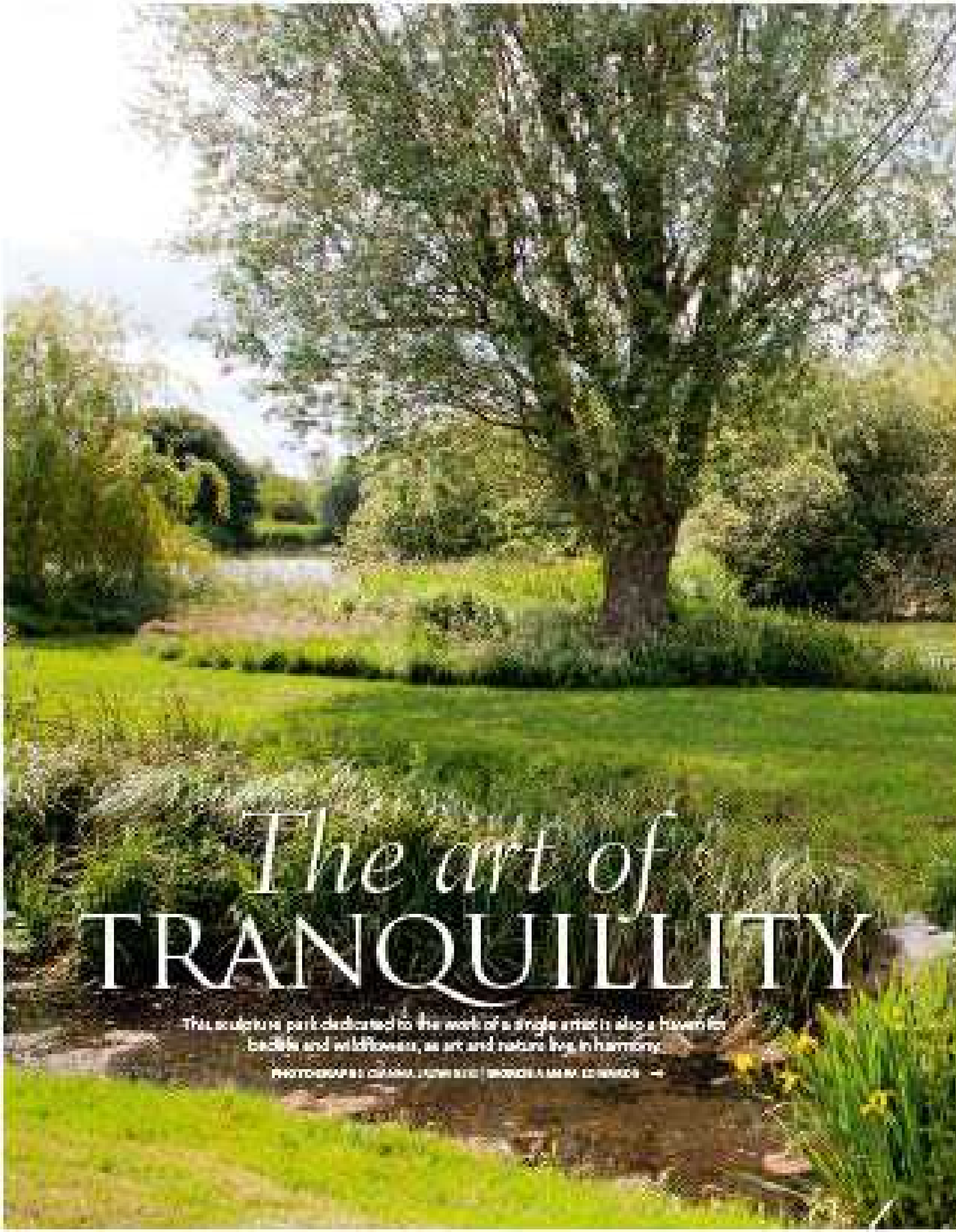


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The art of TRANQUILITY

This sculpture park dedicated to the work of a single artist is also a haven for beetles and wildflowers, as art and nature live in harmony

PHOTOGRAPHS: GRAHAM LOWRIE | WORDS: EMMA EDWARDS →



In the garden at Sculpture by the Lakes, Monique Gudgeon prefers to frame the works of her husband, Simon, with a view. The sculpture *Thoth* is placed at the head of the largest of three lakes in the garden.

At first sight, Pallington Heath in West Dorset seems an unlikely place to seek tranquillity. Power lines fizz and crackle overhead, fearsome tanks grind up and down at the nearby military training camp at Bovington, and Lawrence of Arabia met his end just round the corner.

Yet here, around a chain of former fishing lakes, Monique Gudgeon has succeeded in creating what she thinks of as 'a modern-day Arcadia' – a serene landscape of trees and water, billowing grasses and froths of wildflowers, a landscape calculated to inspire reflection and repose and – above all – to offer a sympathetic setting for the monumental bronze works of her sculptor husband, Simon.

'We never set out to create a sculpture park,' says Monique. After a succession of rented houses where she could never fully set down gardening roots, the couple were looking for a place of their own with an acre or two of land, an outhouse that might serve as a studio, not too distant from either the galleries of New Bond Street or the foundries where Simon casts his bronzes. A working fishery in West Dorset was wildly off-brief – but truly irresistible.

They arrived on a winter's day in 2007 to a blank canvas of mown grass and random willows, with no thought beyond getting a lorry-load of 'orphan' plants safely into the ground. The idea for a sculpture park came like a lightning bolt three months later, when they borrowed for the summer a favourite sculpture that was in storage between exhibitions. It looked so good in this wild, watery landscape, it sparked an ambitious garden plan.

Fierce winds promptly uprooted their new plantings but Monique soldiered on. Before too long a flowery, semi-formal garden had taken shape around the house, bamboos and ferns were thriving under the trees, and she was planning an ultra-modern gravel garden, inspired by the pared-down, patterned landscapes of Spanish designer Fernando Caruncho. Like him, she enjoys the drama of massed plantings. 'Coming here defined the type of gardener I am,' she says. 'I don't like lots of different things in a bed, but much prefer big sweeps of one particular species.'

A stint working at Architectural Plants, Sussex, developed in Monique an eye for the sculptural possibilities of plants. In this garden, the plants themselves become the art – soft mounds of *Lonicera pileata* 'Moss Green' sculpted under the guidance of master-pruner Jake Hobson, curling ribbons of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Red Head' snaking up to a mound topped by a pair of bronze cranes.

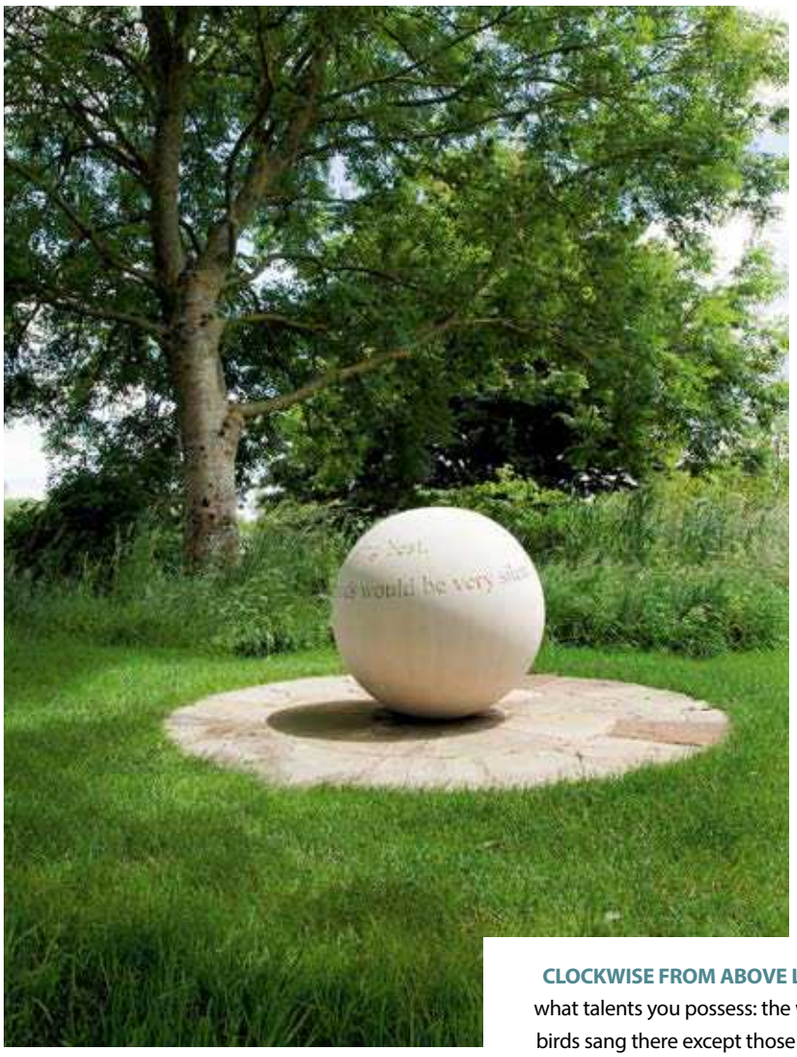
Art and garden become indivisible: a vista under a pergola is terminated by *Isis* – a statuesque bronze bird whose twin resides in London's Hyde Park. A smaller version is in the Prince of Wales's garden at Highgrove. A kinetic sculpture (Simon's latest enthusiasm) enacts a delicate semaphore from the centre of a reflecting pool. Chains of pebbles →



RIGHT Wildflowers appropriate for damp and boggy ground abound in the land edging a recently renovated pond. Waterlilies were planted in the pond itself.
BELOW A view from the jetty on what Monique calls the Rainbow Lake.

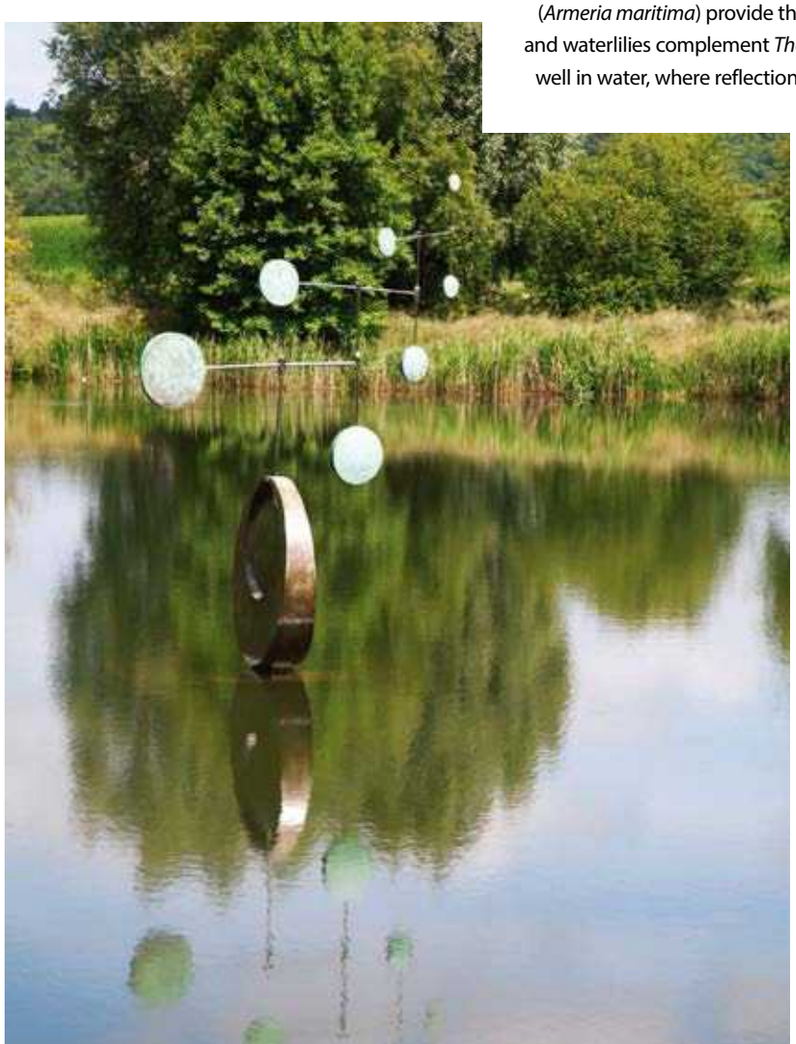
A chain of lakes has become a modern-day Arcadia

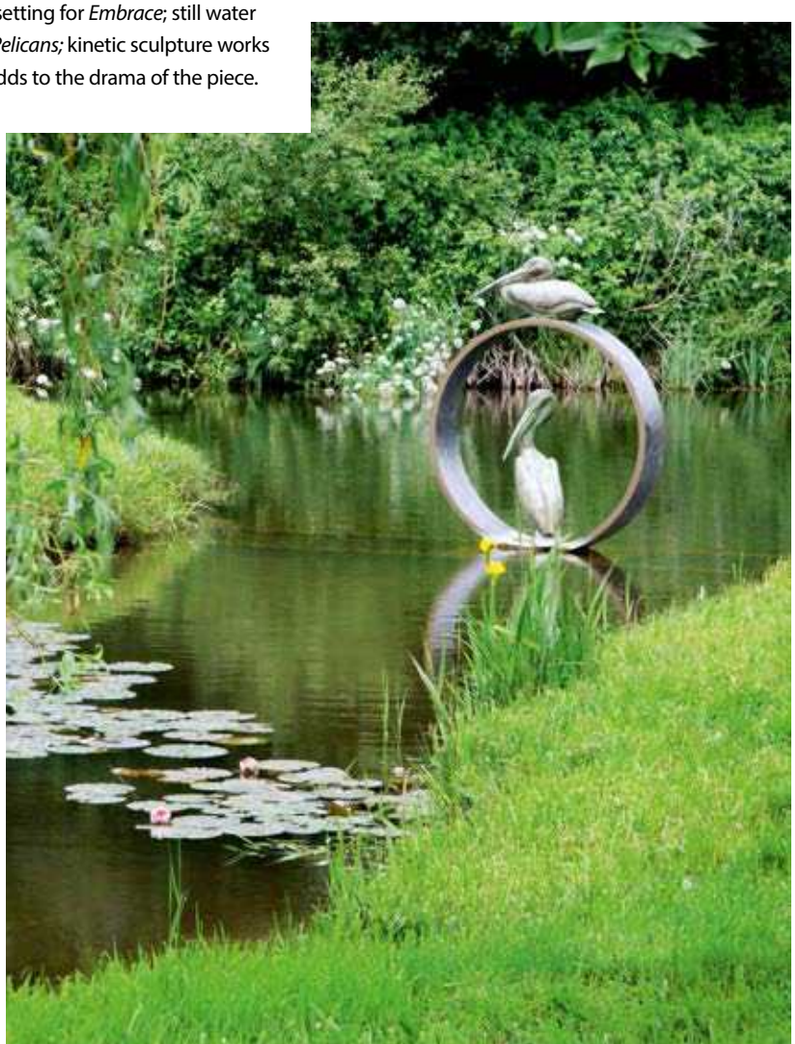






CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT A sculpture inscribed, 'Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best'; gravel and thrift (*Armeria maritima*) provide the setting for *Embrace*; still water and waterlilies complement *The Pelicans;* kinetic sculpture works well in water, where reflection adds to the drama of the piece.



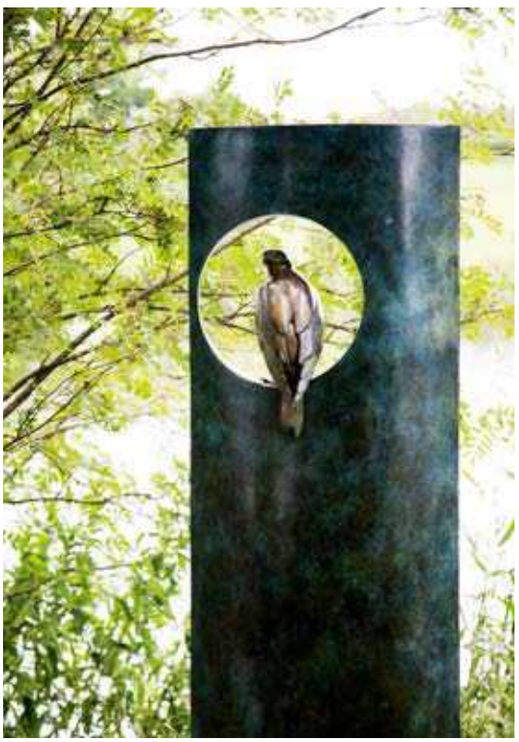




The sculpture *Origins* in one of the smaller ponds. Water acts as a mirror here, bouncing light up and across the piece.







→ hang like outsize catkins from the apple trees. This is an especially lovely sight in spring, when the orchard is in blossom. Inset into the paths are apt quotations, such as 'Nothing is more the child of art than the garden,' by Sir Walter Scott.

This use of words in the garden was inspired by the Scottish gardener-poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. He could be scathing of modern sculpture gardens, and strongly disliked they way art was often sited in the landscape. Monique is inclined to agree. 'Just dropping sculpture into a long-established garden often seems to work to the detriment of both. The sculpture has to blend in rather than stick out like a sore thumb. It needs the right context and the right scale.'

So at Pallington, the art always comes first. Some 30 pieces are ranged round the lake, some reflected in water, some in shadowy groves; some commanding the landscape, demanding to be seen from afar; some to be discovered in an intimate space.

'What I try to do with my planting is frame the pieces – not to distract your eye from the sculptures because they are the stars of the show. Sometimes it's quite simple – just a matter of mowing an area of grass. Others require more of a backdrop: for example, a pair of fighting pheasants with dramatic spiky phormiums behind them work together very well. Or there's an ultra-modern abstract piece in a windswept area of garden where the soil is very poor. Here I've planted two beds of thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and they've done really well. In May and June the sculpture rises from a sea of shocking pink.'

She has planted more than 4,500 trees and shrubs, and worked hard to improve the ecological diversity of the site, so that real deer, owls, songbirds and waterfowl have made their homes among their beautiful representations in granite, steel and bronze. It is only fitting, after all, that work inspired by the beauty and wonder of nature should be enjoyed in a natural setting.

ABOVE Selected sculptures in sympathetic settings, from left: *Barn Owl*, *Dancing Cranes* and *Falcon*. **BELOW** A private corner on Artist's Pool, an ideal spot for a picnic.

Sculpture by the Lakes, Pallington Lakes, Dorchester DT2 8QU. The garden is open Monday to Saturday, 11am-5pm. Tel: 07720637808. www.sculpturebythelakes.co.uk

Monique's top tips →



Sculpture by the Lakes garden notebook

THE POWER OF WORDS

Words, carved into stone, or simply pinned to a tree, were often used in 18th-century gardens to create a particular mood. It is a device that works just as well in contemporary gardens.





FORM AND FUNCTION

Bear in mind that every element in your garden – a pot, a swing-seat, even the way a table and chairs are placed – can become a piece of everyday sculpture.

Garden challenges

LAYERING UP Watering and weeding young shrubs and trees in this large garden are two problems for Monique. Her solution is to mulch thoroughly, which conserves water and protects plants from undesirable companions.

Monique's tips for introducing sculpture

- **It doesn't matter whether it is a costly bronze** or a simple pot – placement is all. Take time to find exactly the right spot, thinking about the location of the best views in the garden, what can be seen from the house or a favourite seat, and the scale of the piece. Stick in a bamboo pole the same height as the sculpture to see if it is tall enough by itself, or needs some kind of plinth. Consider how it will look both at a distance and when you are standing right beside it – both have to please.
- **Think hard about a suitable background**. Even the strongest form will be lost among a mass of different flowers, colours and leaf-shapes: for maximum impact choose a single variety of plant. If you do want to place your piece in a flower border, either keep the planting low, or raise your piece on a pedestal.
- **A hedge – especially an evergreen one** – makes a perfect backdrop for sculpture. But be sure the top of the hedge is comfortably above the piece, rather than cutting through its middle.
- **Water gives an extra dimension to sculpture**. Not only do you enjoy the pleasure of reflections, but the sun bouncing off the water lights the art in a completely different way, changing minute by minute.
- **Consider how the vagaries of the weather** will affect both the piece and its backdrop: rippling grasses make a most attractive setting; frost-blackened or wind-battered plants, rather less so.



WILDFLOWERS

Large areas of topsoil were removed from the site and sold off when the lakes were first dug out. While this is a challenge for tree planting, it creates perfect conditions for sowing wildflowers.



ALSO IN THE AREA

Other places to enjoy sculpture

- GARDEN **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** One of the world's largest sculpture parks, set in 500 acres, with works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and others. West Bretton, Wakefield, WF4 4LG. Tel: +44 (0)1924 832631. www.ysp.co.uk
- GARDEN **Tout Quarry Sculpture Park** In 1983, a group of artists and the local community set about regenerating a quarry, with more than 60 works carved into rock faces, shaped from boulders or made from shale. Portland, Dorset DT5 1BW. Tel: +44 (0)1305 826736. www.learningstone.org
- GARDEN **The New Art Centre & Sculpture Park** An intimate park which has mastered the art of perfect placement. All works are for sale, and changing displays have included the likes of Antony Gormley and Peter Randall-Page. Roche Court, East Winterslow, Salisbury. SP5 1BG. Tel: +44 (0)1980 862244. www.sculpture.uk.com

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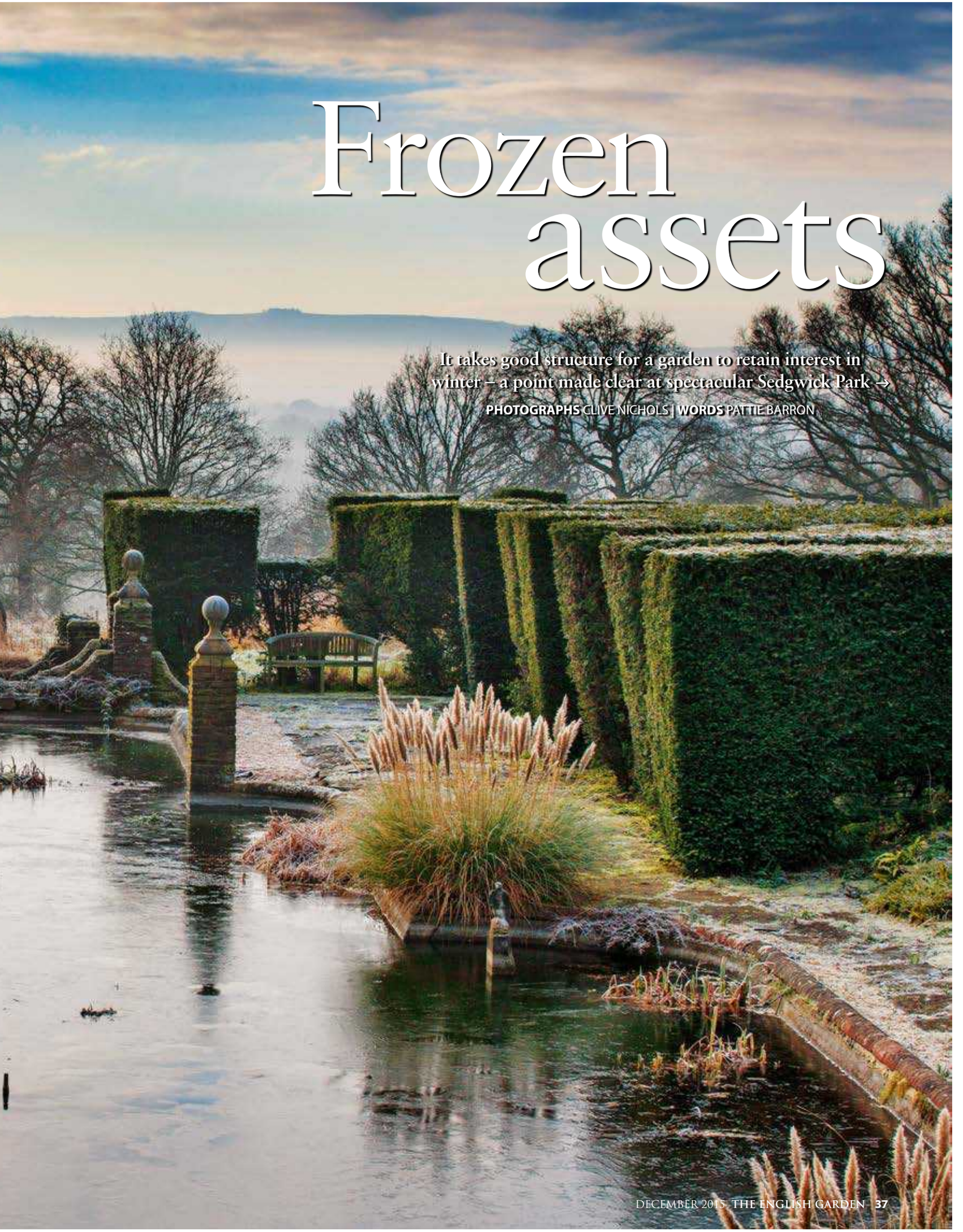


Columns of yew flank the long canal, affectionately known as the White Sea. They offer year-round interest, not least in winter when the bones of the garden are laid bare.

Frozen assets

It takes good structure for a garden to retain interest in winter – a point made clear at spectacular Sedgwick Park →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | **WORDS** PATTIE BARRON





Light frost dusts the flat tops of the clipped yew like fine white icing. Down by the long water canal, the silver plumes of the pampas grass shimmer in the low winter sun. The tunnel of broad, black metal arches that runs the length of the Rose Walk, now devoid of blooms, is thrown into stark relief. Fantasy birds of gleaming patchwork metal are caught in freeze-frame while stalking across the grass.

At this time of year, the garden at Sedgwick Park House, West Sussex, is simply spectacular – but then, it does have that fundamental quality essential for looking good in winter: great bones. These were laid out by the architect and garden designer Harold Peto in the late 19th century, when he also designed, with architect Sir Ernest George, a new house that adjoined the older 18th century manor house. The 14th century Sedgwick Castle once stood on these same grounds, and small stretches of medieval castle walls in the woodland area of the 15-acre garden, which is an enticing contrast of formal and wild, add to its character.

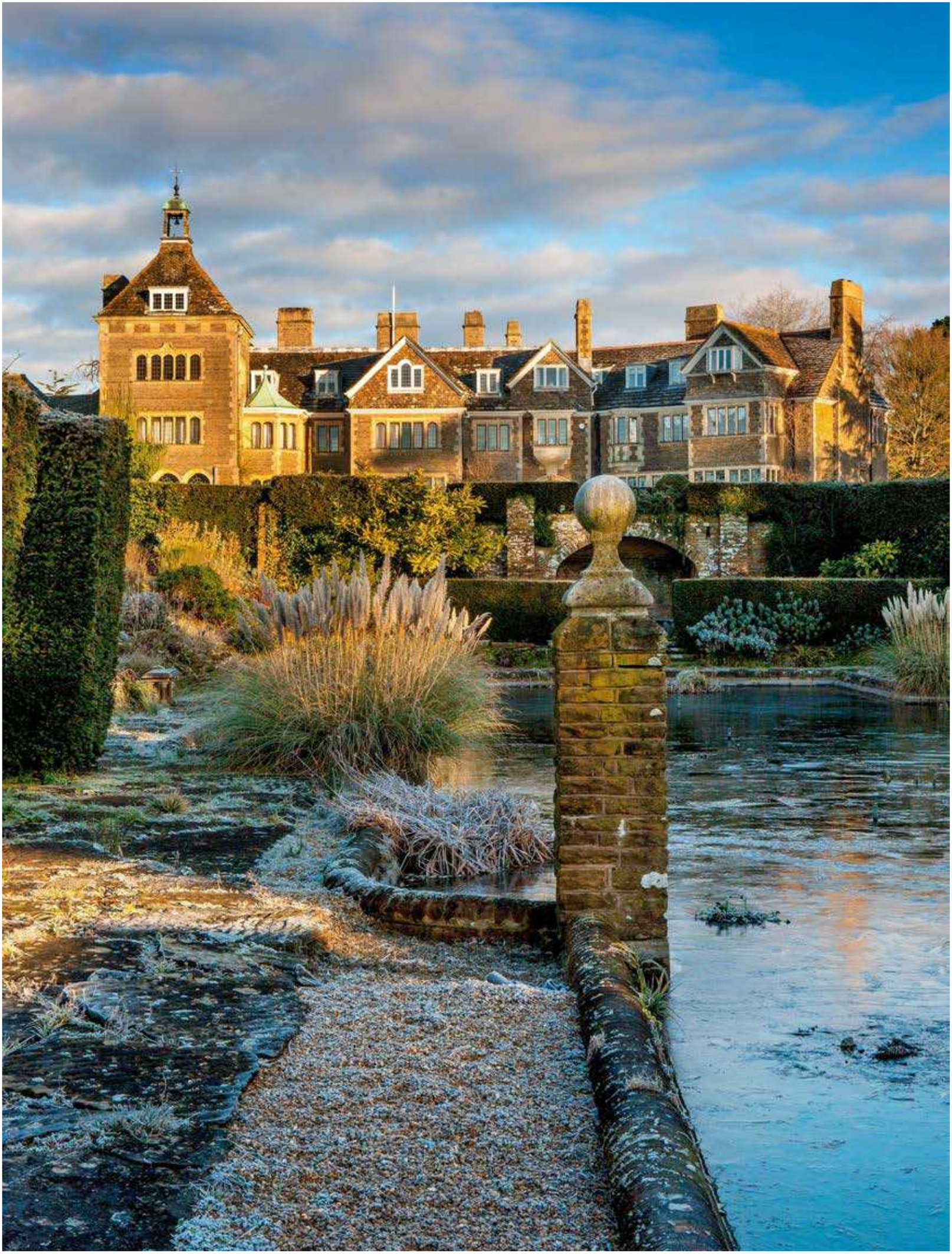
ABOVE Metal arches in the Rose Walk are shrouded with roses in summer, but in winter their simplicity is revealed. A focal point at the end of the walk remains. **BELOW** The inclined shape of yew topiary introduces humour to the formal garden, seen here in a paved terrace east of the house. **RIGHT** Formal gardens frame the rear of the house. Clare Davison likes to bring stems of pampas grass indoors for decorative display.

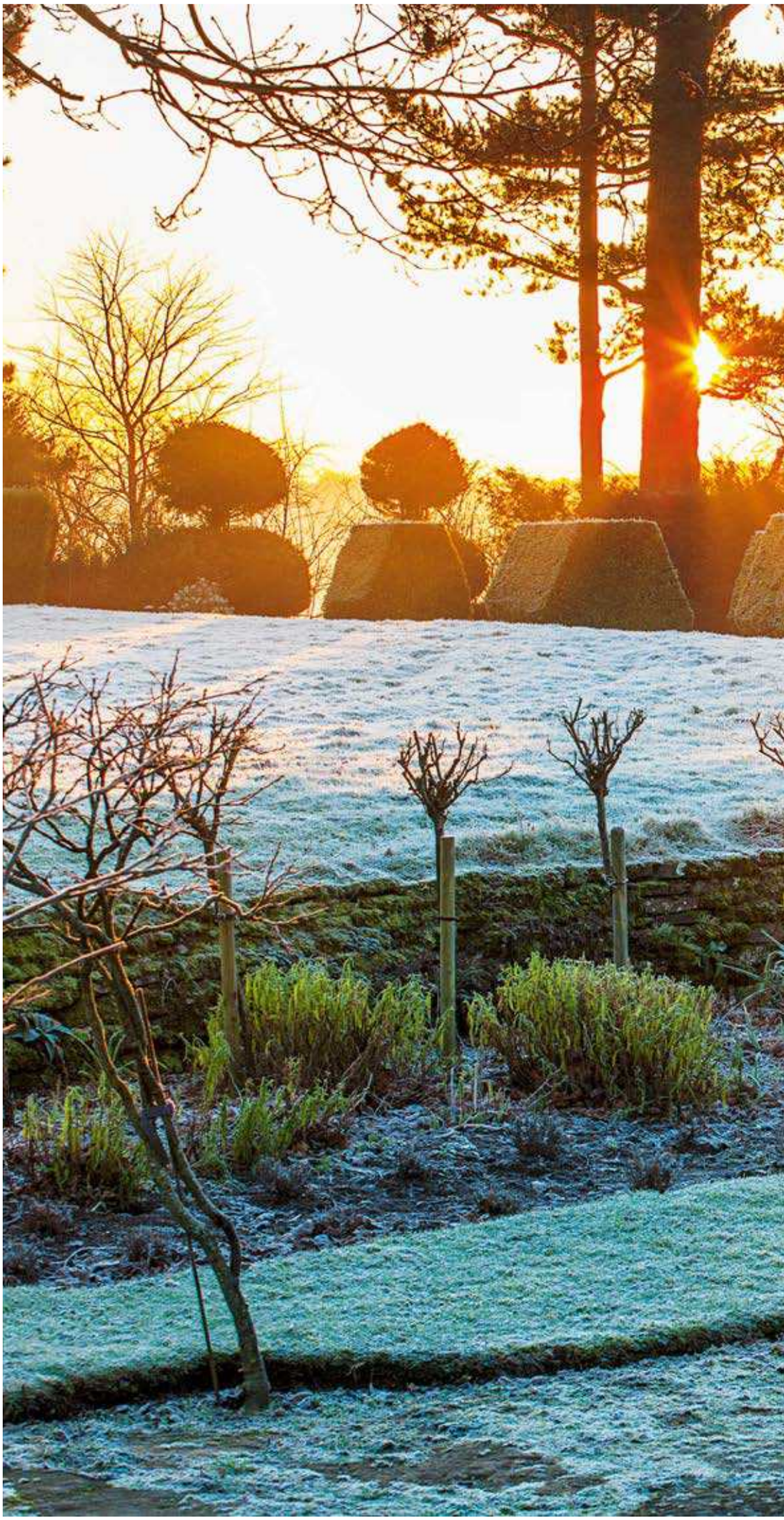
With wildflower meadows to the front, formal gardens to the rear of the house and the woodland to the west and meadows and fields beyond, the 90-acre Sedgwick estate is in the safe and enthusiastic hands of current owners John and Clare Davison, who have lived here for 14 years. They moved from London because Clare, an interior designer of long standing, wanted a large house where she could create a holistic retreat. So these days, yoga might be practised on the immaculately striped lawns, or tai chi on the sweeping terrace of local Horsham sandstone that wraps around the back and side of the house.

Laid out beyond the terrace, with two vast Monterey pines on either side, are two rectangular lawns, flanked by →

The 15-acre garden is an enticing contrast of formal and wild







RIGHT Rose and lavender beds have been planted below the croquet lawn. Clare is planning a small wildflower meadow in the centre of the croquet lawn, in continuation of the theme of formal and wild.

→ blocks of yew. A central path leads to the canal, where great crested newts, a protected species, are resident. Deep, sloping rockery borders on either side are planted with euphorbia, iris, cistus, phlomis, yucca and rosemary, Mediterranean plants that are all perfectly suited to the garden's chalky, alkaline soil. To the left of the lawns, and as sharp contrast to their formality, a naturalistic pond bordered by marsh marigolds and primulas overflows into a second pond, and so on, down the gentle slope, so that, in all, there are 20 rippling streams that finally flow, aided by a pump, into a larger pond at the far end of the garden.

When Kevin Toms took over as head gardener five years ago, the immediate problem was deer, which were wandering in and treating the garden as an all-you-can-eat buffet. 'They were chewing up everything, and coming in because the estate fencing was too low,' he explains. 'So the first thing we did was have the whole 15 acres ringed with proper 2m-high deer fencing.'

There is now a rather good souvenir of the deers' destructive eating habits: the conical shape of the yew topiary that borders the central lawns and adds a touch of eccentricity. Originally, the yews were rectangular blocks, but the deer gradually nibbled their way around the bases. 'Rather than struggle to make the shapes perfect once more, I thought I might as well make proper shapes of them, so now the tops match the bottoms,' says Kevin.

This playfulness extends to the rest of the garden, not only in the red phone box by the Rose Walk, and the skeletal French metalwork deckchairs that sit out all year – just two consequences of Clare's frequent hand-raising habit at →







→ auctions local and London – but also to the nautical names given to different features by past owners, the Hendersons, who commissioned Peto and Sir Ernest George. Thus the long canal that runs down the second part of the garden is called The White Sea, the yew columns that run along either side are the Cabins, while the Captain's Bridge, with cascades of prostrate rosemary that emulate water, overlooks the White Sea (the Bulwark yews run down one side of the croquet lawn and swimming pool).

Beyond the White Sea, down in the meadow area, the ground is different from the free-draining soil of the main garden. In summer it dries out and cracks; in winter, it floods, so the enterprising Clare – who keeps the rough pasture of the wilder areas in check on a ride-on mower – turned it to an advantage by creating a classic Greek labyrinth by cutting out the turf to shape pathways of pea shingle. The labyrinth has at its heart a huge standing stone which was already in the garden, and which they rolled down the slope to its resting place on four poles. The standing stone is in perfect alignment with not only the central line of the formal pathway and canal, but with Chanctonbury Ring on the South Downs in the distant horizon – once the site of an Iron Age hill fort, now marked by beech trees.

Winter tasks for Kevin are all about maintenance: clearing, turning compost, as well as clearing the ponds of duckweed in an original but practical way. 'At the end of summer, I stop pulling out the duckweed on the ponds and, because it lays on top, in winter it all freezes,' he says. 'I crack a little bit here and there, and then get into the pond and take it away like a big pane of glass. It's much easier that way.'

Between them, Clare and Kevin make a good team. 'I might not know the plants to ask for,' says Clare, 'but I can say to Kevin, 'I want something with that shaped leaf, or a spring flower that's yellow,' and somehow he'll come up with just the very thing. It's important to me that we have the right plants to bring in the wildlife, which I'm passionate about. I even let the caterpillars eat some of the cabbages in the vegetable plot.'

In a more informal part of the garden, a series of rocks had been

The bones of the garden that create such a presence in winter will be a constant. Why mess with perfection?



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Paths of pea shingle delineate the grass labyrinth in Greek style. A standing stone is positioned in its centre. Duckweed is deliberately left to freeze on ponds, as it becomes easier to clear this way. Sculptural tree forms punctuate a view from the main entrance to the garden. Wildflower meadows lie dormant here. A filigree of bare tree branches is reflected in the lower pond at this time of year.

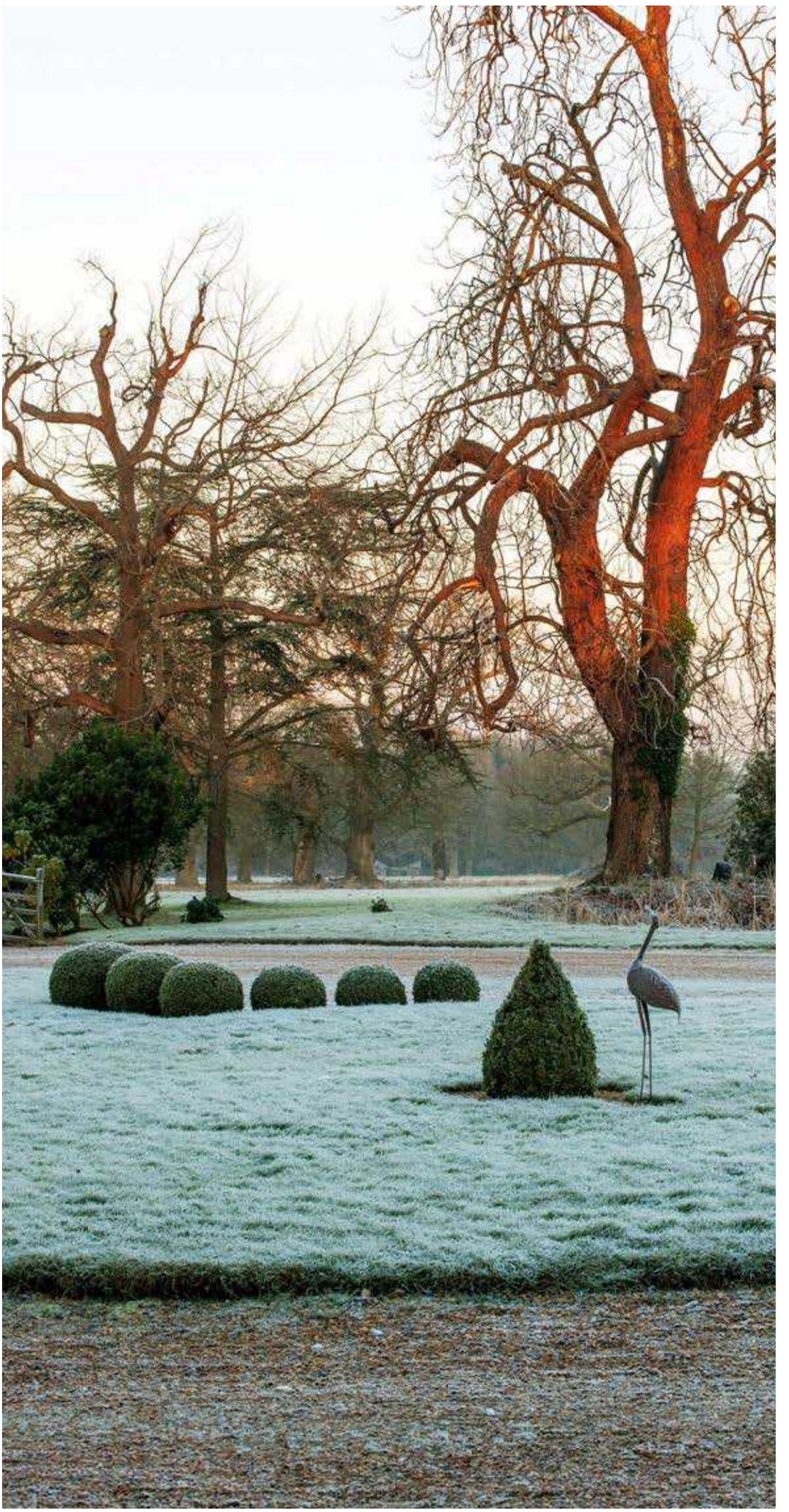


randomly placed on the ground. Clare decided to turn them into a more purposeful rock garden. Now orange crocosmia pops up alongside purple *Verbena bonariensis*, which, with aquilegias and sisyrinchium, have self-seeded and add to the beauty of the garden in early summer. The two herbaceous borders that run along the top of the main garden had been replaced by previous owners with low-maintenance shrubs, but Kevin has planted them with higher-maintenance perennials to restore their splendour.

Clare, typifying her fondness for 'wild' contrasting with 'formal', has plans for a wildflower mini-meadow in the centre of the pristine croquet lawn. But the bones of the garden that create such presence in winter will be a constant, because they are Grade-II listed. And, besides, why mess with perfection?

Sedgwick Park, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6QQ. Open for the NGS on 15 and 18 May 2016, and to small groups by appointment. www.sedgwickpark.com

Kevin's top tips →



Sedgwick Park garden notebook



THROUGH THE GARDEN GATE

Despite the grandeur of the garden, it can only be accessed by visitors through this narrow entrance, with ornate Victorian cast iron gate and surround. Clare loves the fact that it is not until you have gone through the gate and turned the corner that you see the whole garden laid out before you.

WALKING WOUNDED

Although deer have been outlawed from the garden, a rusted, mythical stag and fawn, welded together by Zimbabwe locals from disused car parts, are a fixture in the woodland. The adult is on borrowed time, having already fallen apart and been patched up by the local blacksmith.





VENTURE TO THE INTERIOR

Clare designed a labyrinth for the end of the garden. It follows a standard Greek template and has at its centre two large stones that were already in the garden. She says that walking a labyrinth is all about the discovery of life, but for gardener Kevin it was also a solution for transforming terrain where little else would grow aside from rough grass.

Garden challenges

ORGANIC 'Clare is passionate about nature,' says Kevin, 'so we are not allowed to use chemicals, which makes weeding the pea shingle pathways by hand time consuming. As there's just two of us, and we're not full-time, it's a struggle to keep on top of it.'

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are visiting, Clare recommends

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Kevin's garden tips

- **When I gardened at nearby Chesworth House**, the owners were friendly with Lady Pulbrook, the founder of florists Pulbrook & Gould. She advised me to cut all the foliage of *Helleborus orientalis* when they start to bud. I've found this produces more blooms of better quality, and when they're over, the foliage returns.
- **I carry out my wisteria pruning in winter for best results**. At the end of December, I cut wisteria down to four buds. Later, in very early spring, I cut right back to two buds.
- **We cut all the yew back just once a year**, in May before our open days. If you cut too many times in a year, it makes them vulnerable. When you clip yew, don't leave the cuttings on top because they fall back in and can cause disease.
- **One of my winter tasks is to trim the edges** of the lawns to create a neat edge. It's important to keep off the grass during winter, as it can easily get damaged. For this reason, I always cut edges from the paths.
- **Clare likes to use the long stems of pampas grass** as decoration for the house. For the best display, I chop everything back right to the base in early spring, but only every other year.





Jakoustic fencing makes an attractive timber backdrop to the gorgeous, award-winning Mediterranean Memories garden by Sally Perigo. Read more about this garden and the products used to create it at: www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle.

Jacksons Fencing

How a fence can change your life!

Back in 2005 I visited a lady who had installed a new type of fencing in her garden, that she said had changed her life. That's quite a claim, how could a fence make such a difference to someone's life?

Tracking back to before this happened, Mrs Young visited Jacksons Fencing. She was an existing customer of Jacksons and was desperate to find a solution to a problem. Thirty years previously when she and her husband had moved into their house, it was a quiet rural area. Over time, a nearby road had become increasingly busy, traffic flow and speed had intensified to the extent it was no longer possible to enjoy time in their garden.

The Youngs were considering moving house, but really didn't want to, they were very happy there apart from the noise of traffic becoming too loud to bear.

Another option was to install a second fence line at the foot of their garden, and maybe even put an acoustic infill material in the gap between the two fences. This is why Mrs Young called in to Jacksons, to pick up the latest Good Fencing Guide with the thought of getting a second fence.

Imagine her delight when she discovered she wasn't the only person wondering how to dampen problem noise by using a fence. Jacksons, she found, had just developed Jakoustic. Traditionally used as a motorway fencing system, acoustic barriers had been adapted for use in a residential setting. Constructed from heavy-duty timber posts and panels made from thick tongue and groove style boards, Jakoustic has the appearance of any solid timber garden fence, and of course has the Jacksons unique 25-year Jakcure guarantee. This was the answer to Mrs Young's prayers.

Once it was installed, the couple were overjoyed at the difference it made to the sound levels in their garden and they told me when I called in, "now the traffic noise is on the road and not in the garden!"

The Youngs also mentioned that friends and family have been very impressed at how good the fence looks and that it is now once again possible to hold a normal conversation in the garden. There's also no need to move from a house and area that they love, so this could be considered a very happy ending.

So that's how a fence can change a life.

louise@jacksons-fencing.co.uk

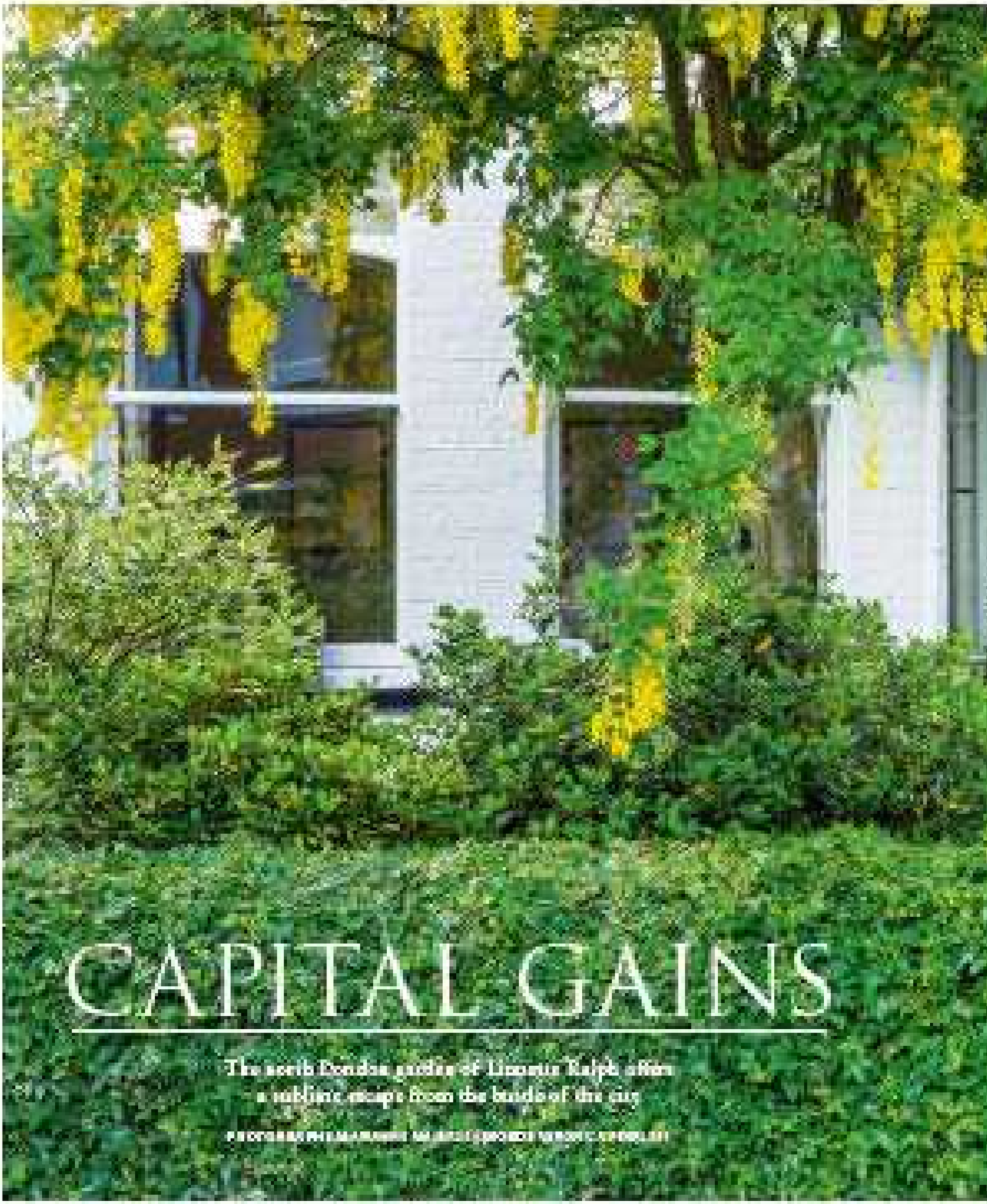
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CAPITAL GAINS

The north London garden of Lionnie Kalpk offers a sublime escape from the bustle of the city



The front garden is planted with *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety', *Laburnum* x *watereri* 'Vossii', *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima', and hellebores.

It's not often that you see a plant-packed, well-tended front garden – and when you do, it's a sure sign that the back garden will be pretty special too. That is certainly the case with Linnette Ralph's North London home.

When she moved in 24 years ago, the back garden was a typical London set up: a long, narrow garden (25m x 6m), with a lawn and a climbing frame. Then, in the mid 1990s, a friend of a friend who had trained as a garden designer came up with the layout that remains to this day: a terrace in front of the house, a circular →

lawn surrounded by planting, and a path that leads to raised beds at the back. It fulfilled Linnette's criteria for a place to gather to eat, somewhere for her children to play, and raised veg beds.

Since then, the layout has stayed much the same, apart from the back part of the garden, which had a revamp in 2012. Some 'horrible' inherited fir trees were replaced by a potting shed and a silver birch, plus a second seating area. Linnette has also added a second path, which almost winds fully around the circular bed beyond the lawn.

The planting, on the other hand, has changed many times. Linnette even replaced the lawn with gravel at one point, having been inspired by a garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show – but she missed the grass, and reinstated it. The gravel was edged with lots of tiny box plants, which have subsequently become fat box balls dotted around the garden, echoing the circular theme. They also provide interest and structure in winter, as do the numerous shrubs and trees, which include a rowan, multistemmed silver birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*), *Prunus serrula* and a fastigiate flowering cherry, *Prunus serrulata* 'Amanogawa'.

It's the perennials that Linnette enjoys fiddling about with. 'I'm always splitting, dividing and swapping. I used to have a bit of everything, but now I like to have repetition – over the years, I've learned that works better.' She also favours plants that offer a long season of interest, or more than one season of interest: 'In a small garden, all the plants have to earn their keep.'

The four raised beds at the back of the garden are Linnette's playground. 'It's out of sight, so I can do anything there.' Although two of the beds were originally intended for veg, with one for fruit and another for a cutting, in reality they are often full of plants that Linnette has divided or taken cuttings of, and self-seeders that she has dug up, waiting for a new home. 'I am constantly changing this poor garden,' says Linnette. It looks all the better for it.

Linnette's garden, which is located near Alexandra Palace, will open for the NGS on Sunday 12 June, 2016. For more information, visit www.ngs.org.uk.



▲ **AL FRESCO DINING**
One of Linnette's priorities was to have an outside eating area near the house. She inherited the crazy paving with the house. It is now largely covered with an ever increasing amount of plants in pots.

WORK AND PLAY
The garden is divided into two main sections: a circular lawn, and the 'working' area at the back, with a small picket fence between. The fences (1.5m tall with 60cm of trellis) are clothed with climbers, including pyracantha, ivy, a climbing hydrangea and a Virginia creeper; the left side is clothed entirely with *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. Linnette likes variegated plants, and has five dogwoods (*Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima'); they are also repeated in the front garden.



▲ **THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS**
The border between the two main parts of the garden is filled with some of Linnette's favourite plants – alliums, *Nectaroscordum siculum*, *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus*, *Iris sibirica*, grasses, hardy geraniums and *Alchemilla mollis*.

'I am constantly changing this poor garden – but it looks all the better for it'



◀ **FOLLOW THE PATH**
Some of the best garden paths are textural and meandering. This one is laid with a mix of stone, pebbles and scattered gravel. Fatsia (berries below left) a hydrangea and *Viburnum opulus* 'Compactum' are underplanted with ferns, geraniums, *Alchemilla mollis* and Japanese anemones, all of which conspire to soften this gentle garden artery. →

▲ MAKES SCENTS

At the back of the garden, some inherited fir trees were cut down and replaced with a potting shed and a dining area. It is backed by a scented *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. One of the raised beds, formerly a cutting patch, has been planted with more bee-friendly plants, including scabious and chocolate cosmos.

The raised beds are Linnette's playground. 'It's out of sight, so I can do anything here'

▶ PERFECT PLOTS

Linnette's raised beds are reminiscent of those in Mr McGregor's garden. She intersperses herbs with flowers and grows marigolds as pretty companion plants. A fruit bed is home to strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb and a gooseberry.





HI-HO SILVER!
In the back of the garden, Linnette recently planted a multi-stemmed silver birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*). It is underplanted with ferns, foxgloves and lily of the valley.



A FRAGRANT MIX
Originally intended to be a herb bed, Linnette explains that this space is 'now more mixed planting interspersed with herbs'. Among rosemary, sage and thyme grow sweet peas on homemade supports, aquilegia and *Verbena bonariensis*.

PLANT PROFILES



UNUSUAL EUPHORBIA
The diminutive *Euphorbia hypericifolia* 'Silver Fog' is a tender perennial that flowers for months with very little attention.



SCABIOUS
Scabiosa 'Butterfly Blue' flowers for several months in summer and is extremely popular with bees in Linnette's garden.



MEXICAN DAISY
One of Linnette's favourite plants, *Erigeron karvinskianus* appears throughout the garden and self-seeds readily.



IRIS
There are several clumps of *Iris sibirica* 'Caesar's Brother'. They are earmarked for a plant stall when the garden opens for the NGS in 2016.

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SHAPE SHIFTERS

Garden and landscape designer **Laara Copley-Smith** suggests three ways to use topiary in outdoor spaces







TREES

Topiary and clipped form extends into the realm of trees offering, contained, vertical and solid shape. The trees may be deciduous or evergreen, with various leaf forms available. Favourites of mine are pleached, cubed, pyramid and cylindrical trees. All have a clear stem, available at certain heights with a shaped, clipped head that can be grown to a desired size. If the tree species is deciduous, branches will create a more sculptural tree when they are not in leaf. Fruit trees trained and clipped into classic espalier or cordon shapes look good adjacent to walls and buildings. They also make the perfect sculptural element in a kitchen garden.

FRAMING

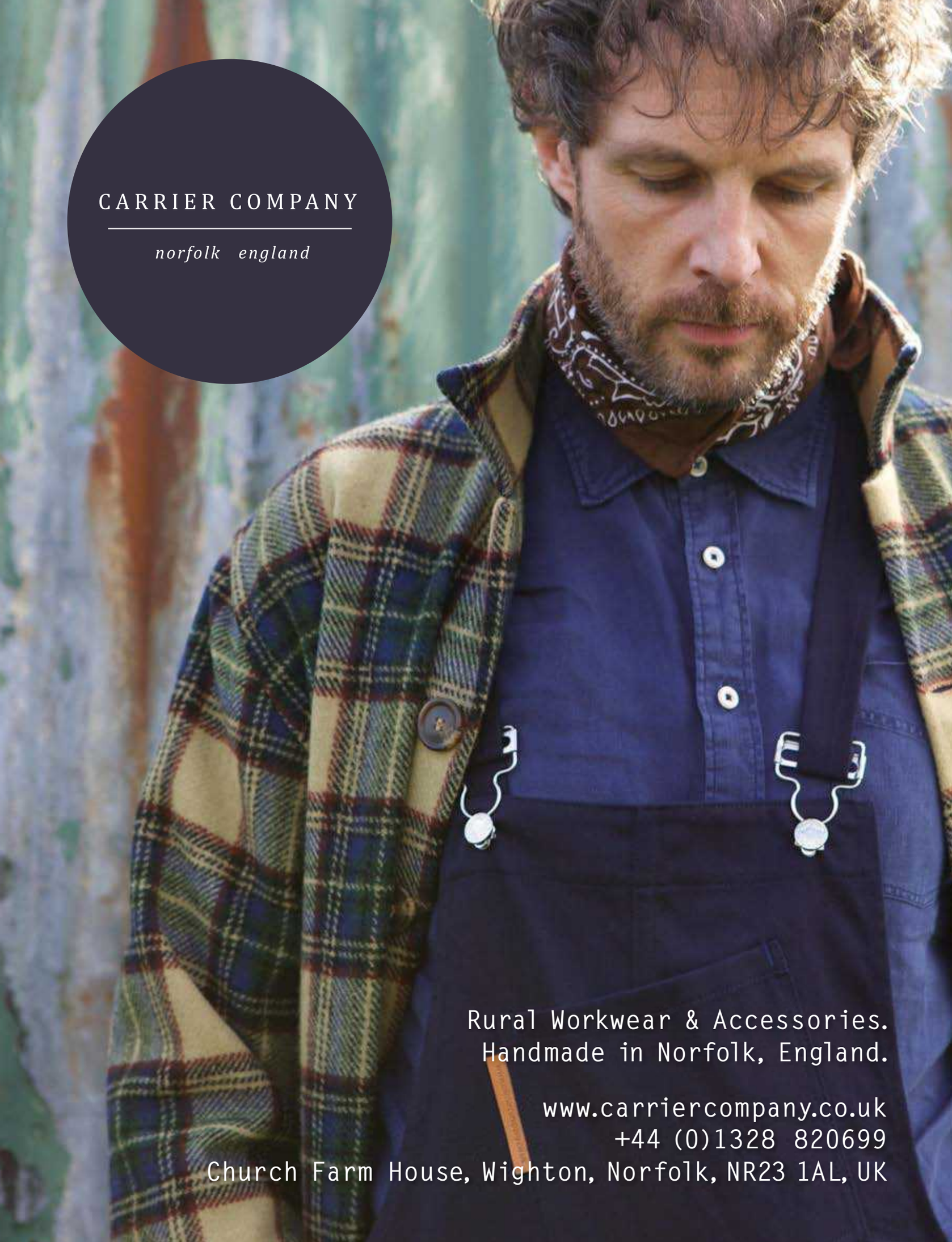
Clipped form is perfect for creating a solid, dense and substantial frame to give definition to pathways, terraces, planting beds and sculpture. Box and yew stand out as pure classics. I like to have wide substantial framing that has more weight and substance. Yew is perfect for this, even when kept reasonably low. Other species, that can be used, depending upon details such as height, density and leaf cover are *Ilex crenata* 'Dark Green', *Ilex crenata* 'Convexa', beech, hornbeam and holly. A few alternatives to box are *Lonicera nitida*, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' for domes, *Hebe topiaria* and other small leaf hebes, escallonia and Portuguese laurel.

INDIVIDUAL PLANTS

You could use individual topiary plants to add markers along a pathway, as transition plants between one space to another, and to emphasize an entrance and exit. Also structured planting within loose softer planting adds definition and solid form. Try clipped matching specimens in gorgeous planters to dress the entrance to a property or garden building. You could even have a row of three clipped pyramids within a perennial border, or ad hoc clipped yew in shapes within a lawn or perennial border (*above*), just like at Great Dixter in the Topiary Lawn and Peacock Garden – although you don't need a Great Dixter garden to add these elements.

IMAGES/LAARA COPLEY-SMITH

To find out more about Laara's work, go to www.garden-landscape-design.co.uk



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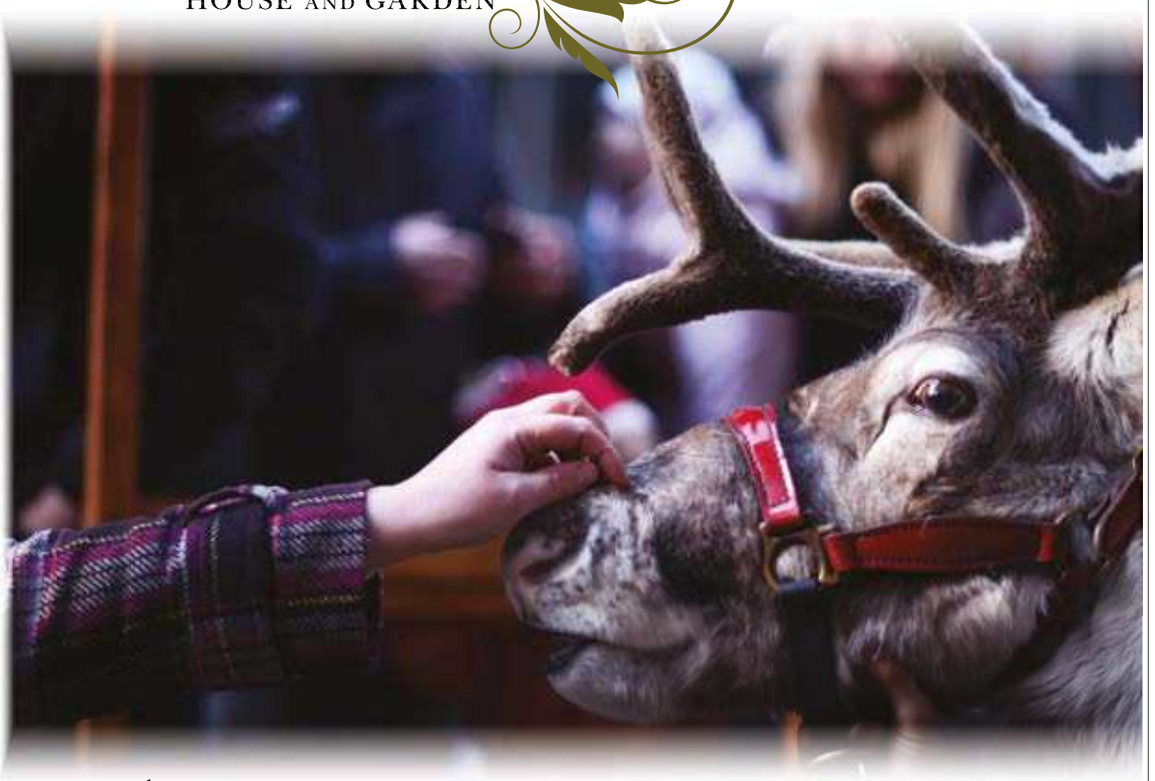


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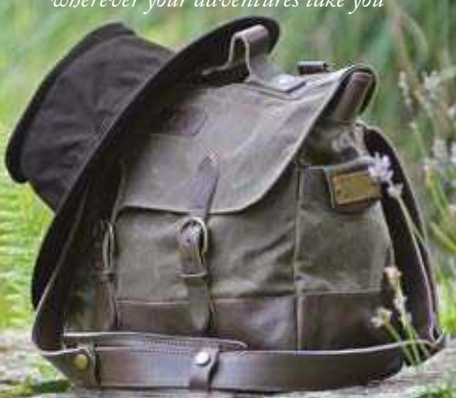


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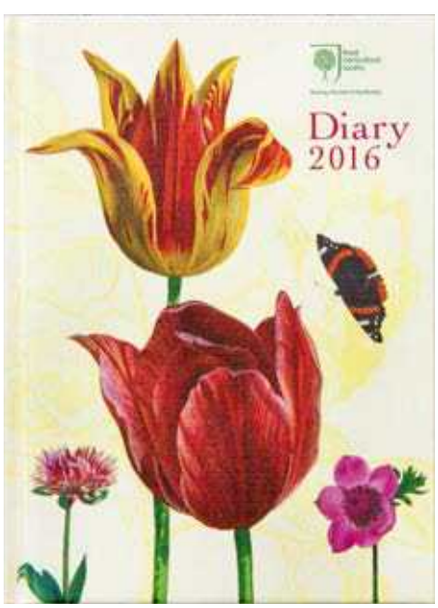
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DIG IN FOR WINTER

Winter digging, feeding the birds and composting are keeping **Tamsin Westhorpe** busy at Stockton Bury Gardens in Herefordshire

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL

If you have hung up your gardening gloves this month, get them down. I am convinced that a bit of gardening before you prepare for the Christmas festivities is a good thing – for both you and the garden. You might also be inspired to make your own Christmas decorations from the garden (see the feature on page 75).

I take my hat off to those gardens that open all year, and offer plenty of colour at this time. We don't have a winter garden, but dotted throughout are real gems. *Cornus mas* is a favourite of mine, with its tiny yellow flowers on leafless stems, and the many hamamellis in the garden offer a similar charm, but with the added bonus of scent. Both offer eye-level interest. Lower down in the borders are the flowers of hellebores, *Iris unguicularis* and *Cyclamen coum*. Trees and shrubs with attractive bark add another level of interest, with *Prunus serrula* taking the crown here.

I find the garden in winter a restful place. Once the beds are cleared, I enjoy seeing the bones emerge. I trained as a parks gardener, so neatly clipped edges and bare soil are comforting to me. I compare winter gardening to laying the table for a banquet. It's time to polish your silver, put out the place names and wait for the event to begin. Imagine if it were summer all year – we'd be exhausted. Use this time to plan wisely. →

ABOVE It's time to harvest holly to make a wreath for the house; the holly without berries is either a male plant or a female plant that has no pollinating partner.

TOP TASK

Feeding the birds

Offering garden birds supplementary food is a very worthwhile thing to do. However, it should go hand in hand with creating a garden that has plenty of food for the birds to eat themselves. Leave a few apples under your trees for ground-feeders, and leave the seedheads of plants uncut in some areas to allow them to feed on the seed. It's a joy to watch the birds feeding on the holly, honeysuckle and pyracantha berries.

At this time, birds are looking for high-fat foods to help them cope with cold nights. Different feeds will attract different birds. I am keen to attract robins and blue tits, so offer up mealworms. The RSPB offers wonderful advice on which feeds attract different birds. My biggest tip to fellow gardeners is to keep the bird bath clean and topped up, and to make sure you keep the bird table clean. It is also wise to avoid putting too much food out, as this can encourage rats.



BELOW Apples are a great source of food for garden birds in winter. Place some on the bird table and also leave a few on the lawn for ground feeding birds such as blackbirds.



Winter digging

Being very traditional gardeners here, we still dig our veg patch. Many gardeners prefer to follow the 'no dig' technique, which I must admit seems appealing some days! Our soil is heavy clay, so it is only turned when it is dry and unfrozen. If you work on it when wet, you will compact a heavy clay soil and damage the structure. To single-dig correctly, dig a trench as wide and as deep as a spade. Add home made compost or well-rotted manure to the bottom of the trench, and then dig another trench behind it, using the soil to completely fill the trench in front, working backwards.

REMEMBER TO...

Lift and move shrubs if the weather is fine. This will allow them time to re-establish before the weather warms up in spring.











IN SEASON

WINTER COLOUR

A clever mix of leaves, buds and flowers means that December is still a colourful month

(clockwise from top left) ***Cotoneaster*** **'Cornubia'** is a semi-evergreen shrub that bears large clusters of berries now; ***Iris unguicularis*** has strongly scented flowers 30cm above ground; ***Viburnum erubescens*** **var.** ***gracilipes*** is a tough shrub that adds a bronzy glow to the end of autumn; **variegated cordylines** are valuable plants for winter glamour if grown in a mild, sheltered spot; the tightly-packed pink buds of ***Viburnum tinus*** **'Eve Price'** open to reveal starry white flowers; ***Mahonia*** **x** ***media*** **'Lionel Fortescue'** has scented racemes of flowers up to 40cm long; the maroon leaf buds of ***Prunus padus***; the leaves of ***Nandina domestica*** **'Fire Power'** will turn a dramatic blood-red as winter arrives. →









JOBS THIS MONTH

Prune climbing roses and protect gunnera

If the weather has been dry and windy, I check that the giant leaves that cover the crown of our gunnera in the Dingle Garden are in place. In October, the spiny leaves are cut off with a small saw once they have been slightly damaged by the first frost. Cut them off too early, and the crown will sweat under the leaves.

Now that the climbing roses are losing leaves, it is an opportunity to prune them. I start by removing all the dead and diseased stems, then prune back flowering sideshoots to about two thirds of their length and cut just above a healthy bud.

Before taking the cut, make sure that the bud you are about to cut above is pointing in the direction you would like a shoot to form. Cut above a bud at an angle with the slant falling away from the bud. New stems are then tied into supports.

The Brussels sprouts that were sown in April are now ready to harvest. Most sprout lovers know that they taste better if picked after a frost. Don't forget that the sprout tops can also be eaten - they are incredibly good for you, and have a cabbage-like taste.

Also in the kitchen garden, I have been pruning the apple trees. Crossing, damaged or diseased branches are removed, and then the previous year's growth is cut back by a third to a bud. Don't be tempted to prune stone fruit such as cherries and peaches in winter, because this will leave them open to infection from a fungal disease called silver leaf.





BELOW LEFT The giant leaves of the gunnera are upturned and kept over the crown of the plant to protect it. **BELOW RIGHT** Climbing roses are pruned to keep them clear of the path and, where possible, the stems are tied in to their wires.

If you are blaming the birds for the lack of berries on your holly, remember only the female holly produces berries – but needs a male close by

Christmas berries

Holly and mistletoe are harvested to decorate the house and parish church. If you are blaming the birds for the lack of berries on your holly bush, consider first that you might only have a male, non-berry-producing plant, or a female that needs a male mate. It is only the female plants that produce berries, and in order to do so, they need a male plant in close proximity. The only way you can tell which sex you have is to look carefully at the tiny flowers in spring. Male flowers have more prominent stamens. When buying plants, they should be labelled male or female. However, when it comes to *Ilex* × *altaclerensis* 'Golden King' and 'Golden Queen', it is the king that is the female. Why, I know not.





Composting

As we continue to cut back borders and prune, the compost heap bulges. We have a pile rather than a heap. In order to create the perfect compost heap, you need to be committed to it. Loading the heap indiscriminately with all sorts from the garden isn't going to produce the best results.

The secret to perfect compost is the ingredients. Between 30-50% should be made up of green material such as weeds and grass, and the rest woodier material such as leaves, shredded cardboard and shredded prunings.

If your compost heap is smelly and sloppy, you have too much kitchen waste and grass clippings. This can be resolved by mixing in woody material. Turn the heap regularly with a fork to speed up the composting process. Expect to have crumbly compost within two years of starting a heap.

How to lift hawthorn seedlings







The small spinney of silver birch at the very end of the Dingle Garden is always the place to find seedlings of hawthorn. These are valuable plants that have propagated themselves and can be heeled in to store them until needed. 1 **Use a hedging spade** (narrow-pointed spade) to lift the young seedlings carefully. This year, I collected about 60 small plants. It is important to lift them from this site now, as there are bluebells here, and stomping around this area any later in the year could damage them. 2 **Dig a shallow trench** ready to heel in the seedlings. Position them at a 45-degree angle to protect the stems from wind damage. 3 **Cover the roots with soil** and firm them in well with the heel of your boot. The prepared seedlings will be left here until we are ready to replant them as a hedge on the farm in late winter.

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DECK THE HALLS

George Newbery of Common Farm Flowers in Somerset makes enchanting winter decorations using nature's bounty









ABOVE (FROM LEFT) The willows growing at Common Farm Flowers are coppiced each year to produce many vibrantly coloured whips; long stems of one-year-old growth are supple and perfect for weaving; mixing together stems of different colours creates an eye-catching wreath.

As we made our first willow circle at Common Farm Flowers, we realised that, with its bright colours, the willow that we had struck (rooted) the winter we moved here would be perfect for weaving into a gorgeous Christmas wreath to bring a festive touch to our front door.

'Here,' is a seven-acre smallholding, half cultivated, half wild, to which we'd moved in 2004 with the idea of starting a market garden. The land is thick Somerset clay, and the water table is so high that, in winter, the water stands inches deep across the meadows. We knew that willow, a traditional Somerset crop, would help drain our clay bog, so when a neighbour offered us the clippings from his collection of cultivars we took bundles to strike in the ground in the hope that they would take root and grow.

And they did. And the willow did drain the land. Along with oak, willow is one of the oldest trees to have colonised Britain after the end of the last Ice Age, and so over 10,000 years it has become a home for an array of invertebrates which form a vital base for the whole food chain. As our willow grew we realised we had a collection of the most beautiful colours on our hands.

We dress the willow circles we make with 'hedgerow bounty'. We like to use what is locally available, and so we 'scrump' our hedges and borders for seed heads, crab apples, sloes, old man's beard, rosemary, dried hydrangeas, rose hips, flowering ivy and mistletoe. Our wreaths look very different from the classic, fir based examples – they are lighter and a bit rustic.

Willow is harder than you might think to manipulate and each wreath takes a while to make. My husband, Fabrizio, shoulders the bulk of this responsibility while I make the garlanding, wiring long strings of material together to attach to the wreath. After Christmas, people take the garlanding off and throw it away, leaving the willow circle, no longer a Christmas decoration, but just a pretty round of stems of different colours to hang in a kitchen or on a garden wall.

Their advantage is that they can be dressed differently for other occasions during the year, such as Easter, birthdays or parties. Often people make fresh garlanding themselves, which they can hang on their front doors again next Christmas. →



LEFT Georgie Newbery gathers foliage from hedgerows and borders to embellish willow wreaths. The excess she uses to bulk up neat table arrangements – here, hydrangea heads, *Viburnum davidii,* holly, mistletoe and rose hips. **RIGHT** Brightly coloured willow stems can be coppiced with a sharp pair of pruners.


We realised that the willow we had struck would be perfect for weaving into a gorgeous Christmas wreath for our front door...







ABOVE (FROM LEFT) These wreaths are made from nine willow whips, each 3m long; weave the stems so they all face the same way to create a smooth, tight wreath; choice evergreens such as variegated holly provide a festive finishing touch to the wreath.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN FESTIVE WREATH

You will need:

- About nine fresh willow whips, each 3m long. Growth from that year is best.
- About three 1m whips for binding.
- Hedgerow treasures for garlanding.

● **Work the willow** by pushing at it with your thumbs until you can feel the fibres inside the whips bending a little to your will. It's very important that the willow doesn't 'crack' when you're making your circle, as the tension will be gone and you'll end up with an irregular square.

● **Take the first stem and bend it** gently into a circle, weaving it around itself until you have a base.

● **Then, stem by stem, weave the stems** around the base of the circle. If all the stems face the same way, the circle will be tight and very smooth. If you weave them one way and then another, it's more difficult to get a pleasing circle, but it is possible to get a wilder, more 'woodland' look.

● **Keep the cut ends of each stem** a little away from the last so that the strong pull of the circle will be evenly distributed around it, providing a balanced round at the end. You may find the ends stick out a bit while you make your circle: that's fine, you can trim them at the end. It is quite useful having protruding ends while you work your circle, as they help keep the tension until you're ready to tidy it up.

● **Once you've wound as many stems** as you like to suit your taste into a lovely circle, use the three thinner, shorter whips to bind the circle. You'll need to work these hard without breaking them, but pulling them about and splitting the inner fibres until they work like a rope. The bindings are very attractive, but also give you something to which to attach your garlanding.

● **To make the garland** you'll need as much material as you think you'd like to cover your wreath. We often leave our wreaths half covered because the colours of the willow are so attractive that we don't want to hide them. So, for a half-length garland, you'll need about 12 or 15 pieces of material.

● **Wire the material tightly**, one piece onto the stem of the previous piece, using the foliage to hide your workings and as a break so that the material is hooked into the system that you are making.

● **Once the garland is long enough**, wire it gently onto the bindings and hang it up. Merry Christmas!

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Viburnum x *bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont' has the largest flowers in this group of hybrids and is the most free-flowering

WINTER'S BOUQUETS

Now is the time that fragrance becomes prominent, says **Matt Biggs**, who suggests some of his favourite winter-flowering plants →

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS



Winter is the season when fragrance comes to the fore, with beguiling perfume rather than blowsy flowers enticing passing insects.

Some plants disperse their finest perfume over a wide area, others are more subtle and restrained. But don't be misled by their sophisticated fragrance – winter-flowering plants are reliable and robust, with weather-resistant blooms. Fragrances are at their most powerful on milder days, so plant them beside a doorway or near a path where their scent can be savoured. It is also pleasing to cut a few sprigs as a posy for the house as they will fill a room with perfume – one of Flora's finest treasures.

Among the most dependable fragrant winter plants is *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont'. Less well known than ubiquitous 'Dawn', it boasts pink blooms and the largest flowers of all the cultivars. The start of the long flowering season in October heralds a succession of densely packed clusters of buds on naked stems which burst into exquisitely perfumed flowers until March, when the plant slides exhausted beneath a blanket of leaves to rest from its exertions until the following winter. Its toughness, tolerance and marathon feats of flowering make this a 'must have' plant for the garden.

Few evergreen shrubs are more florally fragrant than *Daphne bholua*, with several particularly pleasing forms and a spicy fragrance that hangs in the air. 'Peter Smithers', which can be semi-evergreen, has large flowers, with deep purple-pink buds. The darkest of all the cultivars, the lobes retain the colour when they open but the centre becomes white and the flowers darken with age. 'Limpsfield', a more recent, hardy selection, has clusters of regal, dark-purple buds. Most famous of all is 'Jacqueline Postill', raised by plant propagator Alan Postill and named for his wife. This pleasing upright evergreen prefers well-drained, acidic soil in sun or part shade, and the small dense clusters of rose-purple tinted flowers cradled in a cluster of leaves at the shoot tips produce a most sensuous fragrance from December until March.

There are other daphnes worth considering that are not as powerful in fragrance or prolific in flower, but still with an irresistible charm. *Daphne odora* var. *rubra* is a delightful compact evergreen with crimson flower buds opening to a white lobed flower. It is ideal for the smaller garden. Meanwhile while *Daphne mezereum* f. *alba* 'Bowles's Variety'

Don't mistake their sophisticated fragrance for tenderness – winter-flowering plants are reliable and robust, with weather-resistant blooms

ABOVE Position *Daphne bholua* 'Peter Smithers' where the fragrance can be appreciated

RIGHT *Daphne bholua* 'Limpsfield' is weather-resistant and notable for its bi-coloured flowers

FAR RIGHT *Daphne odora* var. *rubra* is compact and best grown on free-draining soil







RIGHT If given protection from the winter's worst excesses, *Edgeworthia chrysantha* is one of the outstanding plants of the season. **BELOW RIGHT** *Daphne mezereum* f. *alba* is the white form of this British and European native – it is vigorous, reaching 1.8m in height.

(sometimes sold as 'Bowles White'), is a small, deciduous shrub of upright habit, with fragrant white flowers in dense clusters along bare stems from midwinter onwards, which are followed by yellow berries. This selection was made by the great gardener and plantsman E.A Bowles, who had a keen eye for a good garden plant. The requirements of these daphnes is identical: well-drained, moisture-retentive soil, free from drought and waterlogging.

Its close relative, highly desirable *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, forms a shrub eventually reaching 1.5 x 1.5m. It blooms from December to March, particularly when the weather is mild. Rather more sensitive than many others, tolerating temperatures to -7°C at the lowest, it needs a warm, sunny, sheltered position protected from strong winds, or a little cosseting in a cool greenhouse in colder climates. Dense clusters of up to 50 vivid primrose-yellow flowers - each clothed in silvery white, silky hairs - appear at the shoot tips in January. This plant of undoubted elegance produces its delicate perfume and gorgeous flowers, then sits serenely, waiting to be adored.

Hamamelis are undoubtedly stars of the winter garden, notably *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Diane' whose fragrant, rich, coppery-red flowers open in February. The cultivar 'Pallida' has sulphur-yellow flowers with a pleasingly fruity fragrance, and 'Aphrodite' with flowers of the colour of marmalade, seduces with the subtle aroma of lemon. *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna*, a form of Christmas box, has narrower leaves than the species and is an excellent spreading groundcover plant for a moist, shady spot. The cultivar 'Purple Stem' is so called because the young stems, leaf stalks and midribs are flushed purple. Both have sweetly scented flowers with prominent stamens. Plant singly or in small groups, as the vanilla-like scent easily becomes overpowering.

Some winter flowering plants have distinctly waxy flowers. *Lonicera standishii*, a large deciduous or semi-evergreen shrubby honeysuckle, is among that number. Bend close to smell the white, →



pink-tinted, lemon-scented flowers which compensate for their somewhat subdued appearance through much of the year. *Chimonanthus praecox* – or wintersweet – is my favourite winter flowering plant, a free-standing or wall-trained shrub for a south-facing wall that takes up to five years to flower, but it is well worth it. Its flowers emit a spicy aroma which becomes stronger as you walk nearer to the plant.

It may be winter outside, but with such warming fragrances, in your heart it will always be spring.

BELOW The spectacular *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Diane' makes a great specimen shrub for a lawn centrepiece

BOTTOM The waxy flowers of *Lonicera standishii* emit a powerful fragrance









ABOVE
Sarcococca hookeriana var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem' thrives in deep shade

LEFT
The delicate flowers of *Chimonanthus praecox* have an exotic, spicy perfume

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Textural charm

As leaves fall, trees with attractive bark get a chance to show off their beauty – **Ellen Carvey** from tree specialists Barcham trees picks her favourites



Acer griseum

This spreading tree – 7m tall when fully grown – is a sight to behold this month. Commonly known as the paperbark maple, it displays its wonderful orange-brown, peeling bark all over the tree, with maximum effect during the winter months. Dull winter surroundings electrify the colour of the bark, making it a hard tree to pass without stopping to admire. In addition to the eye-catching bark, *Acer griseum* has lobed, maple-like leaves that change from a bright green to a fiery red in autumn. It will thrive when grown in moist, well-drained soils and given a sheltered aspect, away from strong winds.



Acacia dealbata

In the winter, the brilliant green new foliage of this acacia has faded to allow the trunk to become the crowning glory. The bark of this interesting evergreen brings texture and colour at a time of year when most other trees and plants are withdrawing to their dullest point. Being native to the warmer climes of Australia, this tree is only hardy to around -5c and therefore should be planted in a sunny, well protected aspect. While a lovely single-stem specimen, do not be afraid to coppice this tree if winter strikes and it suffers the cold; it is likely to make a remarkable comeback.



Lagerstroemia indica 'Rosea'

A wonderful tree that boasts a whole host of qualities, making it the perfect if you only have space for one tree. Preferring a sunny, well drained aspect, this lovely crape myrtle not only has striking paper-like flowers in hot summers, it also has architectural stature that gives interest even in the winter months. The bark is smooth and has a mottled effect, almost pink and cream in colour. The structure is open and striking and it can be planted as a single stem specimen with a mop head crown, reaching up to 7m in height, or grown as a multi-stemmed tree to exaggerate the highly rated bark.

IMAGES/FROM LEFT GAP PHOTOS - HEATHER EDWARDS - ALAMY

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IMAGE/ANDY MCINDOE

ENDURING APPEAL

Winter may be upon us but the show of foliage is still going strong. **Andy McIndoe** picks out 10 interesting evergreens

Foliage is the foundation of good planting. Lasting longer than the ephemeral beauty of flowers, leaves contribute variety and colour for more than one season. Evergreen shrubs are the most enduring of all, providing year-round structure and interest. Far from boring and plain, they offer a great variety of shapes and colours, and there is one to suit every gardener and situation. Many are remarkably tough and shade tolerant, bringing verdant beauty to the most challenging garden situations. Set aside the misconception that evergreen shrubs are big, unmanageable brutes; many are refined characters suited to pots and containers and the smallest gardens.

1 ↑ *Nandina domestica 'Obsessed'*

A compact form of sacred bamboo with stiff, fern-like, evergreen leaves with small, pointed leaflets; olive green through summer, flushed orange red at the top of the stems. As autumn progresses to winter, the foliage at the top of the plant turns to flame crimson. Growing to only 60cm or so, this is the perfect shrub for the smallest garden, or a pot on the doorstep or patio. Try underplanting nandina with black ophiopogon for a dramatic winter effect.



2 ← *Cryptomeria japonica* ‘Sekka-sugi’

Almost unrecognisable as a conifer, this conical shrub has a light, open habit and slender drooping branchlets of pale creamy yellow, which are conspicuous against the pale green foliage at the heart of the plant. Reaching 1.8m in a few years, size can be limited by selective pruning; it can even be trimmed as an unusual, shaggy topiary subject. This conifer is lovely against a Japanese maple with purple-red foliage, and it makes a striking focal point in a mixed planting scheme.



3 → *Pittosporum tenuifolium* ‘Golf Ball’

Unlike most pittosporums, ‘Golf Ball’ forms a rounded mound up to 90cm in height, with a similar spread. Fine, dark stems carry small, bright green, flat leaves, giving a cheery and bright appearance. Dense and bushy in habit, it is still light in character and makes a strong alternative to box. This pittosporum can be clipped in spring for a more formal shape, or left to grow naturally. Grow it for structure in formal or informal planting, or grow it in a pot in a sunny position.



4 ← *Aucuba japonica f. longifolia* ‘Salicifolia’

A superb evergreen with glossy, deep green, narrow leaves carried on sea-green stems. Shiny and reflective, it adds year-round interest to any shady corner. Showy red berries are freely produced from mid-summer onwards; a lively colour combination with the leaves. Growing to 1.5m with a similar spread, size is easily controlled by selective pruning in spring. This shrub grows on any reasonable soil and is a good choice for a large pot. Plant it with *Cornus alba* ‘Elegantissima’ for a colourful foliage contrast in summer and red stems in winter.

IMAGES/FROM TOP: GAP - ADRIAN BLOOM GAP - GEOFF KIDD ANDY MCINDOE



5 → *Hedera helix* 'Erecta'

This is a wonderfully architectural evergreen shrub with upright stems carrying pointed, waved, dark green ivy leaves. These have an elegant, alternate arrangment on both sides of each stem. As the stems grow taller they tend to lean to one side, then grow vertically again up to a height of roughly 75cm. 'Erecta' is a superb plant for shade and a wonderful contrast to the foliage of shade loving ferns. This is lovely under planted with *Cyclamen hederifolium* and snowdrops under trees.



6 ← *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea'

The silver hedgehog holly has the most unique leaves of all the hollies. Dark green and heavily variegated with cream, they have spines on their sides and upper surfaces, making them curiously three dimensional. Lax stems, often cream and green, mean a more informal, loosely bushy habit than most varieties of common holly, and develop a height and spread of 1.5 x 1.5m in about 10 years. This is a lovely contrast to plain, broad-leaved evergreens, and is good under trees, even in dry shade.



7 → *Podocarpus* 'County Park Fire'

A bushy mound of spiky stems clothed in bronze-green, soft, needle-like foliage. A contrast to the colour and texture of most other evergreens, this podocarpus is a conifer which mixes well with other plants. The young foliage of this plant is cream in colour, turning to salmon pink, becoming bronze-red in winter. With a height and spread of 90cm, it can be allowed to grow loosely, or may be pruned into a more compact shape. Plant this shrub with bronze carex and caramel-coloured heucheras for an eye-catching evergreen effect.

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8 ← *Luma apiculata* ‘Glanleam Gold’

Closely related to the myrtle, this lovely evergreen has cinnamon-coloured stems and small, leathery dark green leaves, broadly edged with cream and tinged with pink when young. The shoots are tightly packed with foliage; growth is compact, if somewhat angular. Single white flowers, filled with fine white stamens, appear along the branches in summer. Growing slowly to 1.2m, it is ideal in a sunny spot, especially in a smaller garden. This plant makes an excellent foliage contrast to purple foliage shrubs such as *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea* ‘Rose Glow’.



9 → *Leucothoe axillaris* ‘Curly Red’

A small, striking evergreen shrub with dark green, curiously curled and waved leaves on loosely arranged 30cm stems. The foliage is flushed red as it unfurls, turning deep ruby-red in winter. Leucothoes prefer a shady spot through summer; a perfect position would be under the shade of deciduous trees growing in acid soil. This one is ideal for a lime-free growing medium in a pot or container; choose a pot with a black glaze to create a Japanese effect on the winter patio.



10 ← *Griselinia littoralis* ‘Dixon’s Cream’

Round, disc-like leaves of apple-green, which are broadly edged and splashed with rich cream are striking in any situation in sun or semi-shade. The upright green stems become looser and more arching as they mature, but are never as vigorous and tall as those of the species. Growing slowly to 1.5m in height and spread, ‘Dixon’s Cream’ responds well to pruning, making it suitable for gardens of all sizes. Ideal in coastal and small town gardens, the light, bright appearance of this shrub can lift any dull green planting scheme throughout the year. ◆

Andy McIndoe tutors on www.my-garden-school.com

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Cherchez la Femme

We explore how the rose 'Madame Caroline Testout' got its name from a forward-thinking French dressmaker

WORDS SARAH FEELEY

Back in the days when 'branding' meant approaching a cow's hind quarters with a hot iron, a forward-thinking 19th century French dressmaker expertly harnessed the power of publicity. In Grenoble at the foot of the Alps, Madame Caroline Testout was a *couturière* who owned salons in Paris and London, creating bespoke garments for private clients.

Ambitious to boost both her business and her own profile, prescient Madame Testout made a move that's now commonplace in today's savvy world of commerce, but was rare back then. She pinpointed the most sought-after, in-vogue, must-have item of the moment among sophisticated society at the time – and gave it her name.

Hybrid tea roses were all the rage back then, and she targeted the ultimate rose nurseryman, Joseph Pernet-Ducher – 'The Wizard Of Lyon'. Lyon was a centre of excellence for rose growing, and while Madame Testout visited the city to buy silks, she took the temperature of high society, and realised that having a prestigious new rose named after her would put her on the map.

Pernet-Ducher agreed, but disagreed with her choice of seedling, which he considered mediocre. The lady was not for turning, her choice prevailed – and she was proven right when the rose was a sensation on its debut at Madame Testout's spring fashion show in 1890.

With abundant, silky, rose-pink flowers and a delicate fragrance, *Rosa* 'Madame Caroline Testout' was an instant hit with her well-heeled clientele, as well as with gardeners. Two years later, the RHS bestowed an Award



Madame Testout took the temperature of high society, and realised that having a prestigious new rose named after her would put her on the map

Of Merit on the rose, and Reverend Pemberton of the National Rose Society declared it 'one of the best – if not the very best – new rose of the last seven years'.

Its popularity spread to America and especially to Portland, Oregon. At the turn of the 20th century, as Portland prepared to welcome many thousands of visitors to an 'exposition' or world fair, which included a lavish parade, cuttings of *Rosa* 'Madame Caroline Testout' were handed out to everyone living for many miles along the parade route, which they planted along the sidewalks. This led to Portland becoming known as 'The City of Roses'. Today, there are original roses still growing on the old parade route, and the city hosts an annual rose festival. To protect hybrid roses grown in Europe during the First World War, Portland established the International Rose Test Garden. It survives today as one of the oldest in America, covering 4.5 acres with more than 8,000 rose plants and 550 different species.

Rosa 'Madame Caroline Testout' is considered one of the finest pink hybrid tea roses ever created. And it also played an important part in rose breeding. In 1969, David Austin introduced new rose 'The Wife of Bath', which used 'Madame Caroline Testout' as the seed parent. The new variety contributed significantly to his pink breeding line, with 12 of his roses descended directly from 'The Wife of Bath'. ◆

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GOING WITH THE GRAIN

Dressing the willow and shaving the chestnut, **Charlie Groves** keeps age-old traditions alive in Sussex

PHOTOGRAPHS & WORDS | NICOLA STOCKEN

No gardener's toolshed is truly complete without a trug – a versatile basket that weds practicality with a simple beauty and design that has stood the test of time. 'I'm working with the same native materials and long-established designs that have been handed down by generations of trug makers,' says Charlie Groves, one of the last makers of traditional Sussex trugs.

His is a beautiful rural craft and, as he deftly curves willow boards and chestnut lengths into shape, he shows great skill and an intuitive feel for wood. 'Sweet chestnut is rich in tannins that give durability, while willow is lightweight and straight-grained, giving it incredible strength,' he says. His materials are mostly sourced locally, the willow (*Salix alba* var. *caerulea*) from Gray-Nicolls, a cricket bat manufacturer. 'I use the left-overs – beautiful, flexible sapwood for the boards, and brittle heartwood for the feet.' The chestnut poles, or 'coopers', grow naturally as a result of coppicing – the traditional practice of harvesting the young shoots that sprout from a stump (or stool) of a felled tree. →

ABOVE Trug maker Charlie Groves shapes a long length of coppiced sweet chestnut using a drawknife. These pieces of wood will become the rim and handles of the trugs.







Success is totally dependent on the quality of wood. 'When I can work with beautiful willow and beautiful chestnut at the same time, it's absolute heaven'

ABOVE FROM LEFT: The sweet chestnut used for the handle and rims of his trugs is renowned for its durability; Charlie tests for flexibility before curving the willow boards into the body of the trug; Four sizes of board are needed to make up the body of the trug.

BELOW FROM LEFT: The willow boards are hammered in place with cut copper tacks; Charlie then uses a knife to trim off the excess willow board from above the rim of the trug.

→ Traditional trugs are still handmade, the only concession to modern technology being a power saw tucked away in the shadows of Charlie's old workshop. Here, ankle-deep in curling wood shavings, he sits astride a shavehorse, a traditional work bench upon which he 'dresses the willow', dexterously shaving and shaping each board. 'It's done entirely by hand, and has always been recognised as the most difficult part of the job,' he explains. Success is totally dependent on the quality of the wood. 'It can vary, but when I can work with beautiful willow and beautiful chestnut at the same time, it's absolute heaven,' he says.

Piled beside the shavehorses are the trug frames he made earlier in the day. Each consists of a curving handle and rim crafted from lengths of split and seasoned sweet chestnut (coopers), expertly shaped using a drawknife to create a strong and light frame for the basket. Once shaped, they are steam-bent in a home-made, Heath Robinson-style contraption. 'This is not something you can buy, so it's a matter of make do and mend,' says Charlie as he slides the shaved chestnut coopers into the steamer barrel and closes the door. Within a quarter of an hour, each one is sufficiently flexible to be bent around the corresponding wooden 'former' or frame, one each for the handle and rim respectively. 'The formers come in various sizes corresponding to the trugs' capacity,' he says.

Nearby are stacks of freshly cut willow boards waiting to be cut to the correct length and width, before being shaved thinner at each end. 'I have to make four different sizes of board, each subtly different in shape and width in order to compensate for the way they crowd together at the rim,' he explains. A single 'middle board' forms the flat base of the trug, flanked on each side by the 'second boards'.

Next, curving up to each side, come the 'first side boards' and, finally, stretching up as almost vertical sides to the rim, the 'last boards'. Once prepared, each →







The tricky bit is to get the shape. Charlie secures the rim of a trug, pinning the ends together with a nail. Because of this attention to detail, the trugs he makes are built to last a lifetime.



The final touch is a pair of small willow feet for the trug to stand on… If treated with respect, a trug may well outlive its owner

→ board is pressed into the frame and pinned in place with copper tacks before Charlie trims off any surplus with a sharp knife. The final touch is a pair of small willow feet for the trug to stand on.

After completing a trug, Charlie sits back on the shavehorse, looking at his handiwork which, if treated with respect, may well outlive its owner. 'This is what keeps me going when things are difficult,' he says. 'It's doing the very best I can, with what I've got available, and still finding it interesting.'

Charlie Groves, The Trug Store, The Wattle, Holmes Hill, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 6JA. Tel: +44 (0)1825 873032. www.thetrugstore.co.uk. Traditional trugs made to order cost from £20 to £92, incl. VAT but excl. postage. Bespoke designs are possible.

ABOVE Trugs find many uses. **BELOW** Charlie with his family: his wife Caroline, daughters Holly and Orla, and their Miniature Schnauzer, Worzel, in his own basket, a new product.

TIMES PAST AND FUTURE COMFORT

There are records of trugs being made in the late 1500s, and their development can be traced as craftsmen experimented with different woods such as oak, ash and hazel. Both design and materials were refined by generations of craftsmen until, by the 1800s, sweet chestnut and willow were settled upon. By then, trugs were made in a range of sizes and shapes, varying from agricultural versions that were crude but rugged to elegantly decorative pieces.

The common rectangular version is made in seven original sizes with the two largest quaintly known as the Bushel and Half Bushel, for the quantities they could hold. Other shapes include oval, round and square, and there is even one attached to a walking stick – designed for older gardeners who are not that steady on their feet.

Finally, there is the appropriately named Cucumber for harvesting long vegetables and flowers. It's based on the original Ladies Fancy Knitting Basket, one of a number of finely worked, decorative trugs made in Victorian times. Charlie's most recent and innovative creation is a comfortable dog bed, initially made for a good friend wanting something out of the ordinary. The price of £260 includes a smart, handmade padded cotton liner.



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THE REVIEWER

A selection of the new releases, including a rare look at some of England's finest private gardens and the art of garden design, and we delve into the intriguing untold story of Kew

BOOK REVIEWS

Garden Design Solutions

by Stephen Woodhams

(Jacqui Small, £25)



If you're looking for a good grounding in the basics of how to design a garden, this is a great place to start. Despite its rather lightweight sounding title, and the strapline 'Ideas for Outdoor Spaces', this is a thorough guide to garden design rather than a mere book of snippets.

All the classic principles such as focal points, scale, proportion and texture are explained at length, backed up with anecdotes from the author's personal experience. This adds a nice slice of personality to back up the wealth of practical advice.

As much a long read as a pictorial handbook, the imagery will only inspire if you buy into Woodhams' style of design. There is a strong Mediterranean theme to many of the illustrated designs and case studies, many of them using succulent plants to form the backbone. Outdoor living is also a recurring theme, with furniture taking centre stage in many of the images. Although Woodhams explains many design techniques that can be carried across any style of garden, the reader isn't afforded a broad range of visual examples.

If you have an urban garden that you long to turn into a usable space for entertaining, then the imagery from the author's designs in this publication will excite. If, however, you shudder at the words 'modern or 'contemporary' when conjuring up plans for the garden, you may wish to choose a more traditional or visually comprehensive design guide.

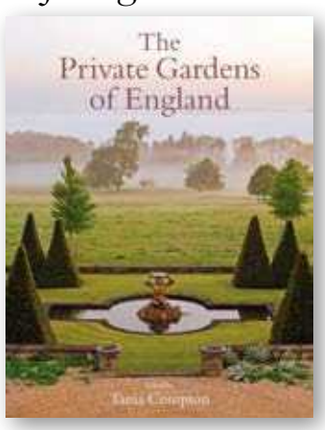
A section on planting introduces the reader to Woodham's favourite plants. While most of them will be familiar to keen gardeners, his trademark planting style suggests ways to see old favourites in a new light. There are countless examples of repeat planting throughout the book that demonstrate how even the most unassuming of plants can make eye-catching features when planted en masse.

Reviewed by Greg Loades

The Private Gardens of England

edited by Tania Compton

(Constable, £75)



Before you turn the page with a yawn at the prospect of yet another lavish coffee table book promising glimpses of expensively designed and previously unseen private gardens, all style over substance – stop. This is quite different, quite special, and has much for real gardeners to enjoy.

For starters, it ascends to a new level of grandeur, featuring the gardens of a duke, a duchess, an earl, a countess and a cousin of the Queen. Many prominent garden designers have thrown open their garden gates for this book, too, not least Tom Stuart-Smith, Mary Keen, Arabella Lennox-Boyd and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan.

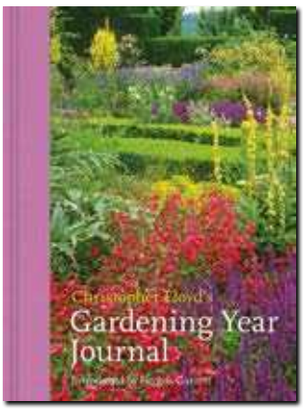
As one would hope for a book that costs £75 and the calibre of gardens therein, the photographs are take-your-breath-away spellbinding, shot by the best in the business, including Jason Ingram, Clive Nichols, Marianne Majerus and Sabina Rüber.

But for me, the masterstroke was getting homeowners to write about their own gardens. Usually with these tomes, the reader is offered an external perspective at one remove from the real-life, flesh-and-blood family who live there, the vision and effort it took to create the garden, and the personal pleasure of having such splendour outside the French windows. And I can sense an author's waning enthusiasm for yet another expertly clipped box parterre as fatigue sets in and the gardens start to merge into one.

Intimacy and immediacy is the result of getting garden owners to write in the first person. The full force of their passion and frustration around creating their home garden engages the reader without it being filtered through a third party and diluted. The energy levels never dip, and insider insights come thick and fast, with self-deprecation cutting far deeper than any outsider would dare to venture. The minute level of detail here will satisfy real gardeners, elevating this book far above its competition.

Reviewed by Sarah Feeley

Fundraising boost



Raise funds for Great Dixter by treating yourself or a loved one to *Christopher Lloyd's Gardening Year Journal* (Frances Lincoln, £14.99).

This new version of the classic month-by-month gardening reference has fresh images by Jonathan Buckley and a new introduction from Fergus Garrett – royalties go to Great Dixter Charitable Trust.

Landscape & Garden Design Sketchbooks

by Tim Richardson
(Thames & Hudson, £29.95)



The chance to see images of gardens in the early stages is always an intriguing one. Seeing the designer's sketches before it was made, maybe even more so. This diverse collection of sketches, from 37 landscape and garden designers around the world gives insight into the earliest incarnations of landmark modern gardens and landscape developments, when they only existed on paper or screen.

The range of projects is vast, with designs for sprawling urban developments as well as gardens. The sketches are backed with an overview of the ethos of the designer and comments from them, although this is much harder to digest than the imagery, which is rightly given the lion's share of the space.

You probably won't spend long looking at the numerous computer generated concept shots, compared to Tom Stuart-Smith's pencil sketches, which are truly breathtaking pieces of work to be pored over and admired. The same can be said of Raymond Jungles's intricate designs of US and Caribbean gardens. More primitive are sketches of Sarah Price's 2012 Gold Medal winning Chelsea Flower Show garden, shown in the most embryonic of stages as merely a collection of rough pencil-drawn shapes. For plant-lovers, Piet Oudolf's epic planting plans offer a fascinating insight into the creation of the 'prairie planting' style that is the envy of so many home gardeners. Maybe it will inspire a generation to put down their Zen colouring books and start sketching out ideas for redesigning the garden instead.

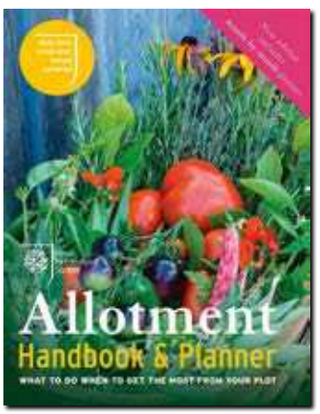
At the end of the book, an assortment of pencil sketches from Cleve West offers an intriguing insight into the designer as well as a much needed element of humour. It also reinforces the point that landscape and garden designers are in the business of creating works of art as much as works of horticulture, something for which they aren't always given enough credit.

Reviewed by Greg Loades

DECEMBER'S FRESH PICKINGS

RHS Allotment Handbook & Planner

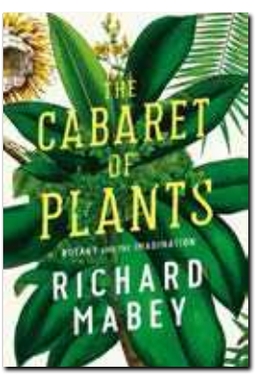
(Mitchell Beazley, £12.99)



The current taste for allotments – they are must-have hipster accessory – has spawned dozens of books, with many clearly geared at the fair-weather novice whose spade is rarely dirtied. This book, however, is for people who really wish to grow their own. With a fold-out, month-by-month planner of what to do when, expert advice, tricks of the trade and top fruit and vegetable varieties from RHS trials, this is a fact-packed book that is easy to navigate, and contains all the information needed to achieve a bumper crop.

The Cabaret of Plants

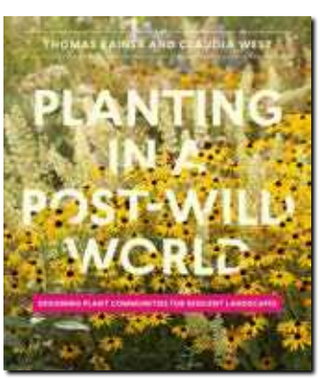
by Richard Mabey
(Profile Books, £20)



Serious plant lovers will adore this in-depth and insightful exploration of humans and plants from the author of *Flora Britannica* and *Weeds*. One of our greatest nature writers, Richard has penned 30 books – yet this is his magnum opus. His sense of wonder and curiosity is boundless and infectious. He delves into the stories behind plant species picked from every walk of life which have challenged our imaginations and upturned our ideas about history, science, beauty and belief. This may be the antithesis of a lightweight 'dip-and-read', but the tone of voice here has a lyrical charm that draws in the reader.

Planting in a Post-Wild World

by Thomas Rainer & Claudia West (Timber Press, £25)



We have driven nature out of our cities – but this need not be a one-way ticket. Thomas Rainer and Claudia West, two leading voices in ecological landscape design, present an optimistic call-to-action dedicated to the idea of a new nature – a hybrid of the wild and the cultivated that can flourish in cities and suburbs. The authors speak with conviction and authority, and offer a practical blueprint for the future. →

We spoke to Vanessa Berridge about her new book *The Princess's Garden* (Amberley Publishing, £20)

Tell us about your new book.
The Princess's Garden: Royal Intrigue and the Untold Story of Kew is about the political and personal background to the founding of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The princess is Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, wife of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who died in 1751 before he could inherit the British throne.

In her widowhood, Augusta built on the foundations laid by Frederick at Kew and established a physic garden there in 1759, helped and advised by John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, later a calamitously unsuccessful Prime Minister. These were turbulent times politically, with Britain still in a state of transition to becoming a fully constitutional monarchy. Augusta was thought to be helping her son, George III, put the clock back to a more authoritarian regime.

Far from being praised for her work at Kew, she was hated and hissed to her grave in Westminster Abbey in 1772.

Why did you want to tell this story?
On a 10-day tour of Scottish gardens, I visited the gardens at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute where there is a towering, statue-topped column dedicated to Augusta. The head gardener told me that it had been erected by Lord Bute in the 1770s in memory of Augusta with whom he had work closely at Kew. I was intrigued by a relationship which resulted in a man raising such a memorial to a woman who was not his wife.

The inscription (from Virgil) on the column's pedestal means, loosely translated, 'You will remain in my memory so long as I am conscious and my spirit controls my limbs'. As I researched, I wanted to restore Augusta to her overlooked position as founder of Kew. When Diana, Princess of Wales, opened the new Princess of Wales Conservatory in 1987, few people appreciated that it was named not for her, but for her predecessor.

How did you research it?
I read published diaries and memoirs of the period before delving into archives at Kew, Stowe, various university libraries and the British Library. One problem was that Augusta burned all of Frederick's papers after his death because she thought his political programme would be unpopular with her father-in-law, George II, and might cause problems for her and for her son, the future George III.





The spiteful memoirs of Lord Hervey, a courtier of George II and his wife, Caroline of Ansbach, were a fruitful source of gossip about both Frederick and Augusta, while Horace Walpole's memoirs and diaries took up the story later in the period. The British Library has a collection of Bute's correspondence which reveals him to be a petulant, disappointed man who believed himself entirely misunderstood.

What fascinating and surprising things did you uncover?
I discovered just how dysfunctional the Hanoverian royal family was. Every Hanoverian king hated his heir, but George II took this to a new level with Frederick, kidnapping him from Hanover, and then isolating him personally and politically. Caroline of Ansbach was even heard to say that she wished he were dead. I also found out how vicious political cartoons were in the 18th century.

Bute and Augusta were thought to be lovers, and the cartoons depicting their affair, some of which have been included in the book, were breathtaking in their virulence and explicitness.

Who do you think would enjoy reading this book, and why?
I have tried to bring out the importance of 18th century gardens as a means of political expression, so I hope that the book will appeal both to garden lovers and to people who enjoy history.



Underground arts scene

A big DRAW

Don't worry if you missed London Transport Museum's recent exhibition of vintage and modern Underground posters encouraging Londoners to use the Tube to visit outdoor attractions such as Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Hampton Court.

You can still view many of these beautiful and evocative posters – and find out about the talented artists who created them – on the website of the museum, which has an online exhibition.

Many of the posters are also available to buy via the museum's online shop, and you can even book onto a tour of the museum's iconic poster collection at its Acton depot. For more details, visit www.ltmcollection.org

IMAGES/UNDERGROUND POSTER - ST JAMES'S PARK, KEW GARDENS BY WALTER E SPRADBERY; VANESSA BERRIDGE PORTRAIT BY CHRISTOPHER DRAKE

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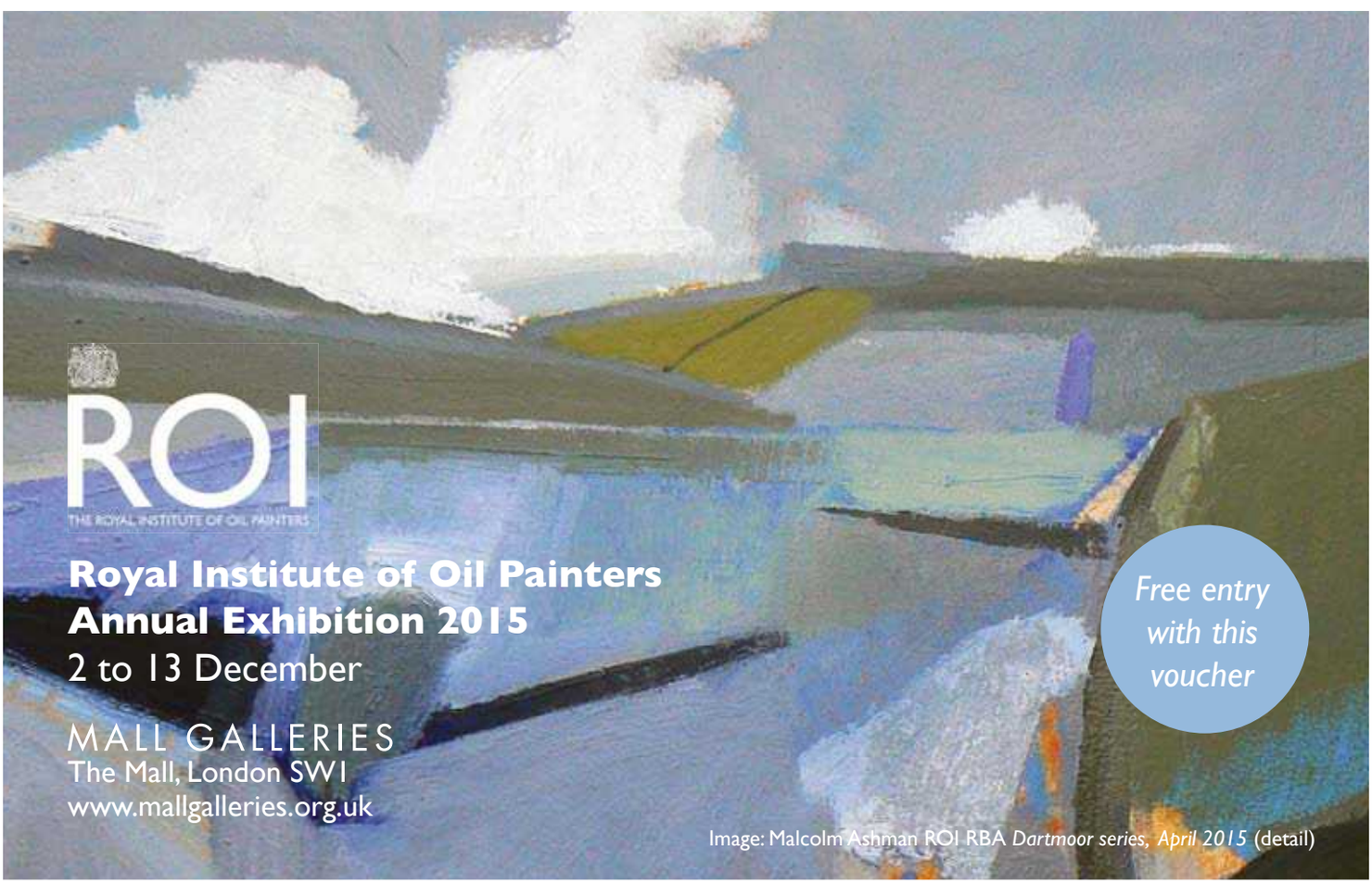
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My favourite plant is the orange tree. I actually describe it as one of the loves of my life because I've used everything it offers in so many of my fragrances, from the flower, the leaf and the stem.

My favourite part of the garden is my whitewashed roof terrace. I have lined the terrace with olive trees. They look simply stunning throughout the year, especially in winter. I love to sit outside when it's crisp, with just my thoughts and a mug of steaming hot coffee. It's the perfect way to start my day.

MY FAVOURITE THINGS

Jo Malone

Fragrance expert Jo Malone picks her top plants, gardens and gardening accessories





The thing I long for most in the garden is a fire pit. I have a very romantic image of me and my family wrapped up, toasting marshmallows on the fire, listening to my husband playing his guitar and us all singing along.

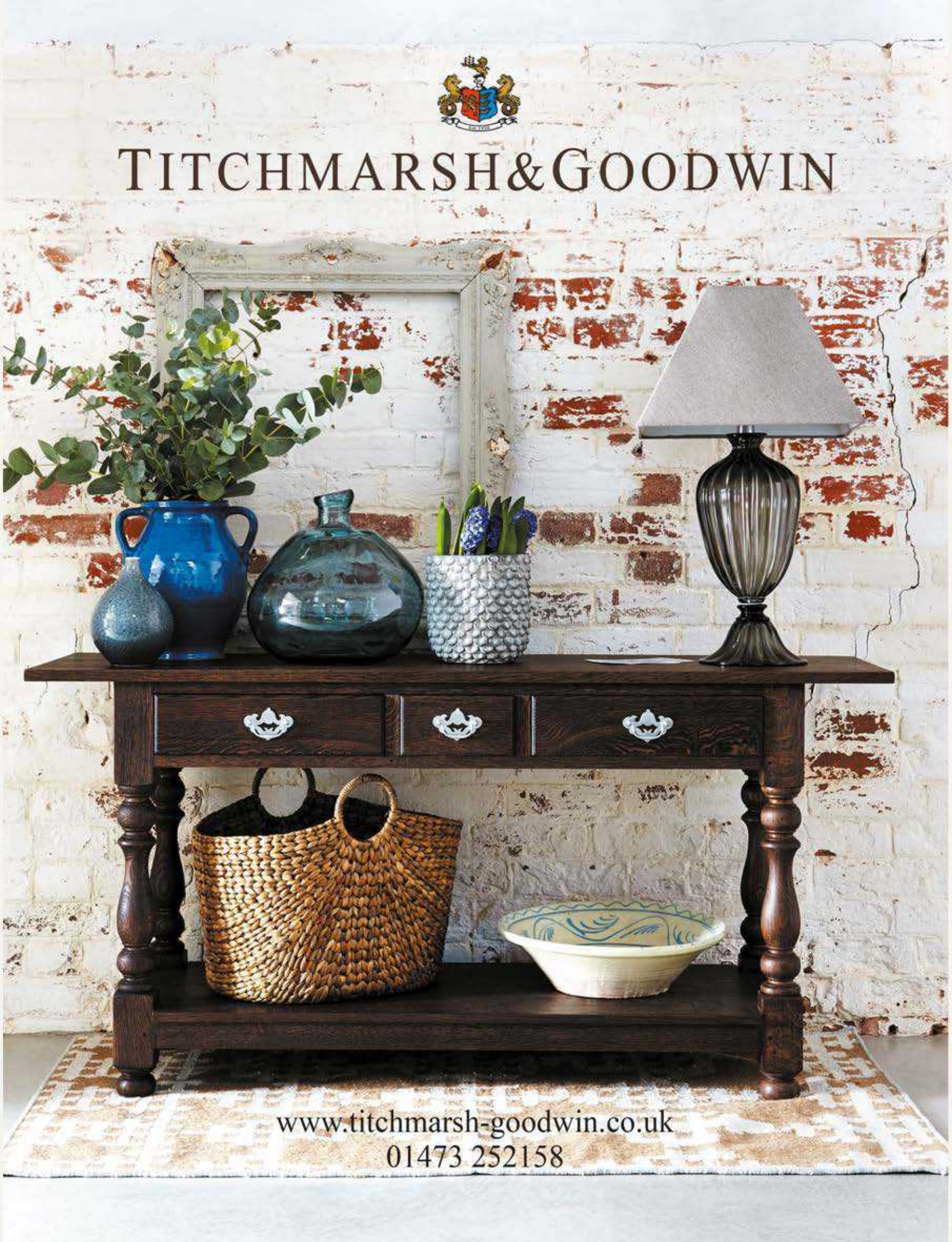


I couldn't live without my Dubarry boots. They are without a doubt the warmest, most comfortable and durable pair of boots that I own. They are also perfect for walking the dog for hours in the park when it's cold and wet outside.

Grasse is the most magical place to see and smell flowers. There is a beautiful walled rose garden near the Grasse perfume museum which transports me to another place and time. I always leave France feeling incredibly inspired and full of creative fragrance ideas.



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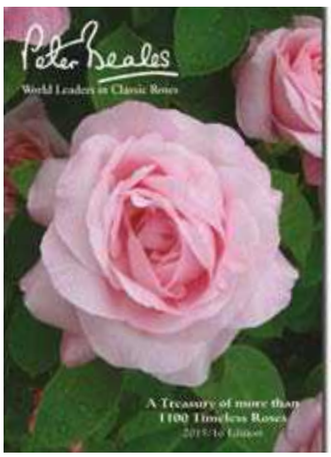
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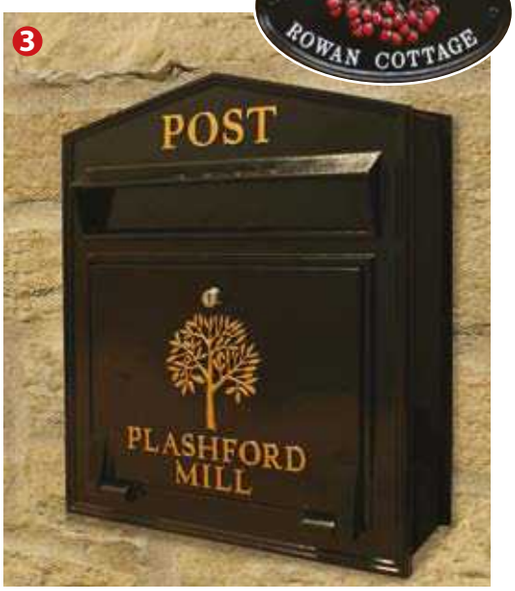
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